TECHNIQUES USED TO CONVEY AN ETHICAL SYSTEM IN THE NOVELS OF HENRY FIELDING

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ATLANTA UNIVERSITY

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR

THE DEGREE OF MASTERS OF ARTS

BY

SHERRY D. BAILEY

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

ATLANTA, GEORGIA

JULY, 1981

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

The novels of Henry Fielding are consciously didactic, as is much of his other imaginative writing. The tendency to didacticism in itself is not unusual considering the period during which Fielding wrote. Beginning his career as a novelist during the latter part of the Augustan Age, Fielding's attitudes towards writing are little different from those of the other distinguished writers of that era. That is to say that for Fielding, as for most serious writers before the Romantic era, the primary purpose of writing was moral instruction. Irwin tells us that Fielding's moralizing was, more or less, a repetition of commonly held ideas and that few of his were original. However, he maintains that Fielding "no doubt felt that he had an ethical justification" for reiterating those ideas since it was the purpose of the moralist to be "effective rather than original."[1] Fielding himself admits the banality of his doctrines of morality when he says,

> Neither will the Reader, I hope, be offended, if he should here find no Observations entirely new to him. Nothing can be plainer, or more known, than the general Rules of morality, and yet thousands of Men are thought well employed in reviving our Remembrance, and enforcing our Practice of them.[2]

---

[1]Michael Irwin, Henry Fielding: The Tentative Realist (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 20.

[2]Henry Fielding, "Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," in Miscellanies, Vol. I, ed. Henry Knight Miller (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), p. 156.

Following the major satirists of the age, Fielding sought to instruct through ridicule. His method was to exhibit the absurdities of the manners and morals of his society in hopes that the laughter he produced would be corrective.

Fielding's work in general is "instructive." Many critics tend to believe, nevertheless, that in the novels the moral instruction was the author's primary emphasis. There is the opinion that the major novels, Tom Jones, Joseph Andrews, and Amelia, specifically, were intellectually constructed so as to present an ethical system and provide instruction as to the correct ethical behavior.[3] Irwin echoes this contention by insisting that much of Fielding's fiction is "tailored to meet the demands of a moral plan" and that the techniques chosen were "usually dictated by the cast of his moral views."[4] Fielding himself asserts his didactic purposes in the prefaces of the novels:

> I declare that to recommend goodness and innocence hath been my sincere endeavor in this history.[5]

And:

---

[3]George Sherburn, "Fielding's Social Outlook," in Eighteenth Century English Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism, ed. James L. Clifford (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 259.

[4]Irwin, The Tentative Realist, p. 1.

[5]Henry Fielding, Tom Jones with an Introduction by Beryl Rowland, Airmont Classic Series (New York: Airmont Publishing Co., Inc., 1967), p. 27. All references to this novel are taken from this edition.

> The following book is sincerely designed to promote the cause of virtue, . . .[6]

Notwithstanding Fielding's own assertions as to the intent of his endeavors, validation for the assertions of these critics may be otherwise difficult to secure. We are more prone to an agreement with their opinions by virtue of the fact that almost all writing of the period held moral instruction as an imperative. Nonetheless, there is little doubt that the novels do exhibit their author's ethos, which the reader is trusted to be capable of discerning through the devices through which Fielding presents it, that is, through characterization, plot, and irony.

When considering the ethical standards Fielding presents in his fiction, there is one important point to keep in mind--that Fielding's standards are conceived in terms of society as a whole; they are practical and would result in the amelioration of a society full of base practices. Like many ancient philosophers, Fielding believed that man is primarily a social animal; his actions must therefore be judged in terms of their benefit to society as a whole. It is upon this basic premise of man's social responsibilities that Fielding's guidelines for behavior are set. It is for this reason that his novels and many essays emphasize social conduct and show a propensity toward social amelioration. But this emphasis on correct social conduct was not unique to Fielding. There

---

[6]Idem, Amelia with an Introduction by A. R. Humphreys (London: Dent and Sons LTD, 1962), p. xv. All references to this novel are taken from this edition.

existed a common belief that civility, or correct social behavior, was just as much a manifestation of morals as of manners.[7] However, it is not only man's social conduct which concerned Fielding. He was concerned that the truly virtuous be distinguishable from those who pretended to be virtuous. The deception of these "pretenders" contributed to the degradation of the society, hindering the attainment of its inherent goal. This concern prompted Fielding's first venture in fiction, Shamela (1741), which is a parody of Samuel Richardson's successful epistolary novel, Pamela (1741). Finding Pamela a "nonsensical ridiculous book,"[8] Fielding set out to show the absurdity of the moral message of Richardson's novel. He saw its heroine as cunning and conniving, and resented the implication--the assertion--that virtue would be rewarded materially--and in this life. His objection to Pamela is stated in the voice of Parson Oliver, the exposer of Shamela:

> . . . to be so weak and so wicked as to pretend to make it a matter of religion; whereas, so far from having any moral tendency, the book is by no means innocent.[9]

Fielding goes on to make objections to specifics in the novel, ending with the reminder that the instructions on morality in Pamela are hardly recommendable to youth.

---

[7]Pat Rogers, The Augustan Vision (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1974), p. 4.

[8]Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews and Shamela ed. with an Introduction by Martin C. Battestin, Riverside Editions (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1961), p. 338. All references to Joseph Andrews are taken from this edition.

[9]Ibid.

Some critics assert that Joseph Andrews, though not primarily a parody, also in part parodies Pamela, or at least began with that intent.[10] Others tend to take Fielding at his word in the preface to Joseph Andrews and deny that he intended to parody Richardson's novel in this case.[11] Despite the disagreement over Fielding's intent in the novel, it is obvious that Richardson's work at least provided Fielding a new medium through which to define his own moral values. The misrepresentation of moral virtues that Fielding detected in Richardson's book was present, in a sense, in the society as well. It was manifest in the character of the "great man" especially, and it resulted in a degree of immorality to which Fielding constantly sought to call attention. This is the common strain in all of his work--fictional and polemical. Through his examples of true and false virtue, present in his novels and essays, he sought to "correct" the public concerning its personal responsibility to the good of society.

In Tom Jones Fielding continues his onslaught against false virtue. It is perhaps this novel which best exemplifies the distinct form of Fielding's didacticism. The novel abounds with exemplars of the "negatives" and "positives" of his moral

---

[10]Irwin, The Tentative Realist. This is also the opinion advanced by the Cambridge History of English Literature, Vol. 10 The Age of Johnson, p. 24.

[11]Battestin denies, in the Introduction to Joseph Andrews and in The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1959) that the novel is a parody. See also Hamilton Macallister, Fielding (London: Evans Brothers Limited, 1967).

system. He leaves no doubt as to his opinion of the actions and characters of the personae he presents. While certainly no parody of Pamela, Tom Jones has been called "profoundly anti-Richardsonian" by virtue of its attitudes concerning prudence and social conduct.[12]

In looking at Fielding's final novel, Amelia, one might detect a less "robust" presentation of the author's moral concepts. One critic maintains that the "moral tone of Amelia is more cautious, less confident of the sheer power of expansive goodness to triumph in a wicked world."[13] This point may be supported by the fact that in some of his later essays, Fielding does not continue to insist that the institutions of society may alter the character of the individual. Instead, he tends to dismiss those inclined to evil as hopeless and concentrates on making evil clearly distinguishable to the "pure of heart" as a kind of protective device.[14] It is not inconceivable, then, that Amelia represents a "toning down" of its author's viewpoint on man's goodness. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that Amelia, like all of Fielding's previous novels, intends to promote virtue through example. In that intent, it is no less "robust" than any of its predecessors.

This study attempts to analyze Fielding's use of character, plot, and ironic statement to convey his moral values.

---

[12]C. J. Rawson, Profiles in Literature: Henry Fielding, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1968), p. 4.

[13]Ibid., p. 8.

[14]See "Characters of Men."

Methodology entails the analysis of each of these devices in terms of how they are used to indicate Fielding's attitudes on morality.

Chapter One is a discussion of the ideas which possibly shaped Fielding's own moral concepts. The chapter includes possible and probable philosophical and religious influences, as well as relevant social ideas prevalent during the period in which Fielding wrote.

Chapter Two is a summary of the principles of Fielding's moral philosophy as set forth in several of his nonfiction works, i.e., essays, poetry, and, in some cases, the discursive passages within the novels themselves. The chapter emphasizes the social and, to a lesser extent, the religious aspects of Fielding's ethical system. Chapters Three and Four consist of the analysis of character, and plot and ironic statement, respectively, as devices for Fielding's presentation of moral principles. Chapter Three isolates "models" for his ideas of morality and immorality, showing his categorical concretizations of these ideas. Chapter Four emphasizes Fielding's construction of situations in which the morality of motives which incite a particular behavior must be judged. Additionally, the authorial comments made by Fielding are examined to determine what indication they hold relating to the moral judgment of the situation he has constructed.

Concluding the study is a summarization and reiteration of the major points of the analysis.

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF FIELDING'S ETHICS

CHAPTER I

THE BACKGROUND OF FIELDING'S ETHICS

The years during which Fielding published his novels, 1742-1752, span two literary periods--the Augustan Age and the Age of Johnson. Though the latter part of the Age of Johnson is seen as the transitional period from neo-classic to romantic literature, the periods are otherwise distinguished almost solely on the basis of chronology. That is to say that although the Augustan Age officially ends with the death of Swift in 1745, there is in fact a continuation of many of its attitudes and practices, both literary and social. Within this context, this chapter is a discussion of the ideas and attitudes of the period which may have been instrumental in shaping the ethical principles of Fielding. An examination of the social, religious, and philosophical ideas relevant to Fielding's own moral conceptions is required to reveal whatever link may exist between his ideas and those commonly held in his society. The discussion is not an attempt to place Fielding exclusively within the realm of any one particular philosophical or religious tradition. Instead, it is a brief survey of the range of ideas that were predominant during the period, with emphasis on the similarities of those ideas to Fielding's.

The Augustan Age is sometimes called the Age of Compromise. One critic describes it as possessing a "Janus-like"

capacity to exhibit both sides of any particular aspect.[1] This meant that the extremes of poverty and luxury, cultivation and ignorance, and refinement and brutality were common. The tendency of the society to exhibit such extremes is an outward manifestation of the conflicts within a society desperately striving towards social perfection, yet ultimately settling for a harmonious compromise that was hardly perfect. Irwin explains that the compromising quality is the result of the combination of two modes of thought--the idea of reason as sole arbiter of conduct and the instinctive "confidence" in the traditions and beliefs derived from the classics.[2] One of these classic beliefs is that of man's responsibility to contribute to the goal of achieving a congenial society. As a social being, each individual has a duty to contribute all in his power to promote the general well-being of the Whole.[3] Another of the classic precepts that was even more earnestly adhered to accounts for an immense paradox in the overall social philosophy of the Augustans, and explains, perhaps, why there was never actually a merging of the society which would have accomplished the social "perfection" they sought. This concept is, of course, the concept of the harmonious arrangement of the cosmos. By the time of the Augustans, this concept had

---

[1]Rogers, The Augustan Vision, p. 9.

[2]Irwin, The Tentative Realist, p. 8.

[3]The idea is derived from the classics, the philosophies of Aristotle, Plato, and Cicero in particular. It was common in this period, which looked to the classics for authority.

expanded to include a moral, social, and aesthetic harmony, comfortably enabling them to view the social structure as a replication of this order. And since the society, they believed, was "divinely" ordered, there was an atmosphere of contentment which does not coincide with their professed concern for promoting the well-being of the whole. A. R. Humphreys explains:

> . . . the eighteenth century inherited the age-old faith that God had appointed the structure of society and that, though the rich should ease the burden of the poor, poverty itself, like pain and death, was part of the mystery of creation.[4]

The faith in this concept, which was both religious and philosophical, extended throughout all aspects of eighteenth-century life, with no expressed reservations concerning how this view of society was restricting to the achievement of the goal of social perfection. Instead, they simply reasoned that the belief did not perpetuate poverty, for just as "God had ordained gradation of wealth he had ordained also the duty of labouring in one's vocation and earning those rewards by which the industrious apprentice might finish as Lord Mayor of London."[5] Naturally, because such as adamant loyalty to the belief in the gradations of society existed, it was quite a while before social reforms were instigated. Yet there was still a striving for social congeniality and in theory, if not always in

---

[4]A. R. Humphreys, The Augustan World (London: Methuen and Co., LTD, 1954), p. 2.

[5]Ibid., pp. 2-3.

practice, there was a compliance with a social philosophy which would accomplish that goal; hence the didactic content of so much of the literature of the period.

The Augustans possessed an immense faith in the power of reason in addition to their faith in the truth of the classic "laws" concerning man's social and moral responsibilities. The views of John Locke, the seventeenth-century philosopher, dominated the period and had a great deal to do with strengthening this faith in reason. By mid-century the climate of opinion ranged from Lockean to Shaftesburyan, "benevolist" to deist; but Locke is undoubtedly the most influential thinker of the period. His concepts are credited with advancing the spirit of compromise which permeated all aspects of eighteenth-century life.[6] His philosophy is in direct opposition to the pessimistic philosophy of human nature advanced by Thomas Hobbes, whose view of mankind was cynical and uncompromising. Locke, on the other hand, was more optimistic; he saw man as a reasoning being capable of achieving moral perfection through the use of that reason. His confidence in man's reasoning power and the benevolence of a rational Deity stirred a spirit of benevolence and incited an active striving toward moral perfection among the Augustans.

Two ideas of Locke's philosophy are of importance to this discussion because they furthered the notion that man is morally educable. First is Locke's concept of a divinely

---

[6]Irwin, The Tentative Realist, p. 8, and Humphreys, The Augustan World, p. 186.

constructed system of morality. Just as God has designed a universe harmonious in the physical sphere, so too has He designed a universe harmonious in the moral sphere. This moral design contains laws which, when obeyed, assure the happiness of the entire society as well as that of the individual. To be morally good, one must willingly obey these laws as well as those laws, social and civil, inherent in the design of the physical sphere.[7]

> . . . yet I think it must be allowed that several moral rules may receive from mankind a very general approbation, without either knowing or admitting the true ground of morality; which can only be the will and law of a god, . . . For, God having, by an inseparable connexion, joined virtue and public happiness together, and made the practice thereof necessary to the preservation of society, and visibly beneficial to all with whom the virtuous man has to do, . . .[8]

Second is Locke's idea of the conception of knowledge in the mind of man. The mind is originally a "blank slate," void of knowledge and ideas. There are natural faculties, but most ideas and perceptions of the world are arrived at through sensation, making certainty almost an impossibility. There is no intellectual knowledge, no religious or moral beliefs; these are acquired only through experience and reasoning.[9]

These ideas, considered along with those taken from

---

[7]Humphreys, The Augustan World, p. 188.

[8]John Locke, An Essay on Human Understanding 2 vols. Ed. with Introduction by John W. Yolton (London: J. M. Dent and Sons, 1961), I, ii.

[9]Ibid.

the Ancients account for the search for social congeniality. The Ancients taught that man must strive for a harmonious co-existence. Locke insisted that man, through his power of reasoning, could know those divine moral laws which would assure that existence; and that since man is the sum of his experience, improvement of those experiences would ultimately result in the improvement of mankind.

Fielding's contemporaries accused him of exhibiting "low" morals in his novels. Henry Knight Miller quotes a few of the "remarks" questioning Fielding's morality after the publication of Tom Jones. One reader states an objection to what she saw as a tendency of the novel "to soften the deformity of vice, by placing characters in an amiable light, that are destitute of every virtue except good nature."[10] Miller also includes a portion of a famous attack on Tom Jones by Sir John Hawkins:

> . . . a book seemingly intended to sap the foundation of that morality which it is the duty of parents and all public instructors to inculcate in the minds of young people, by teaching that virtue upon principle is imposture, that generous quality alone constitutes true worth, and that a young man may love and be loved, and at the same time associate with the loosest women.[11]

The morality which these individuals are concerned with is religious morality. On this point, there is validity in their assertions. Nevertheless, Miller raises the point that the

---

[10]Henry Knight Miller, Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies: A Commentary on Volume One (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962), p. 78.

[11]Ibid., p. 79.

morality which Fielding's novel intends to promote is social rather than religious.[12] Accordingly, he is true to that intent. His conception of morality, though contingent upon religion for support, is not expressed through the use of religious ideals, and Fielding never meant otherwise.

Fielding's ethical system has been assessed as "an amalgam of Platonic-Aristotelian-Stoic principles, low-church Christian doctrine, and empirical observation of human psychology."[13] Some critics argue that his influence is exclusively low-church Anglican; others credit Shaftesburyan philosophy. One critic maintains that because of the range of common ideas between the two, it is difficult to assign either a Deist or Anglican influence.[14] The link between Fielding and the classics is supported by his frequent references to them in his works. But the assessment of religious influence is a more complex matter.

England was predominantly Christian when Fielding wrote. There were, of course, various factions of Christianity, in part an indirect result of the restrictions of the Puritan era that had not long since passed. Anglicanism, Deism, and Methodism were the more dominant of the religious denominations. Fielding's objections to Methodism and its Puritan ideals, especially the doctrine which guarantees salvation through faith, are well-documented in his novels and

---

[12]Ibid., p. 80.

[13]Ibid., p. 70.

[14]Irwin, The Tentative Realist, p. 10.

essays;[15] there has never been much speculation concerning a Methodist influence on his work. Concerning the Deist influence, speculation proceeds in precisely the opposite direction. Until recently, Fielding had been thought to have been deeply influenced by the philosophy of Anthony Cooper, the Third Earl of Shaftesbury, who was himself a Deist. Shaftesbury, with his trust in man's natural goodness, is credited with influencing the mood of Augustan philosophy. His thinking is not as systematic as Locke's, nor was his influence as widespread and lasting, but his Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times (1711), was very popular during the first half of the century. The emphasis in Characteristics in on man's feelings rather than on his rational nature. In its philosophy, reason yields to emotions because:

> . . . we cannot doubt of what passes within ourselves. Our passions and affections are known to us. They are certain, . . .[16]

Moral sentiment is for Shaftesbury the basis of social relationships; feelings are the basis of morality. In exercising social virtue and sympathetic passions, man can fulfill the law of his being.[17]

There are two points which serve as the basis of the argument for Shaftesburyan influence on Fielding. One of these is Fielding's emphasis on natural benevolence and social

---

[15]See for example, Joseph Andrews, Bk. I, xvii; II, xiv.

[16]Quoted from "Inquiry Concerning Virtue" In Humphreys, p. 198.

[17]Ibid.

benevolence, which are claimed as deriving from Shaftesbury. Battestin rejects this argument by maintaining that the emphasis is one shared by Shaftesbury and the late seventeenth-century Anglican churchmen, who anticipated the ideas later advanced in the Characteristics.[18] The implication here is that Shaftesbury was influenced by those clergymen whose work Fielding obviously read approvingly.

Miller and W. B. Coley also deny a Shaftesburyan influence on Fielding. Coley explains that the frequent references to Shaftesbury in the journalistic writings of Fielding are to his ideas on the relationship between "wit" and "seriousness."[19] Miller, however, maintains that Fielding found many aspects of Shaftesbury's thought appealing. It provided him with "weapons against the ethical egoism of Hobbes, a systematic acceptance of the ancient theory of man's mixed nature, an appealing emphasis on taste and breeding, and a serious concern for moral values and for the betterment of human character."[20] However, the most important difference between Fielding and Shaftesbury is found in their attitudes concerning the significance of religion to ethics. They both believed that man had a sense of right and wrong which was separate from religion; for Shaftesbury, it was the "moral sense"; for

---

[18]Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, p. 17.

[19]W. B. Coley, "The Background of Fielding's Laughter," Journal of English Literary History 26 (June 1959):237.

[20]Miller, Essays on Miscellanies, pp. 72-73.

Fielding, it is the virtue of good nature. Shaftesbury insisted that the moral sense is both separate from and independent of religion. Fielding, on the other hand, insisted that religion and morality, though separate, were complementary forces.[21]

The other evidence offered for the influence of Shaftesbury is found in Tom Jones. Hamilton Macallister points out that the novel dramatizes Shaftesbury's lack of emphasis on the power of reason in moral judgments.[22] Fielding's characters, he maintains, constantly arrive at incorrect moral decisions when they resort to reason. Those decisions made by an instinctive feeling of the "rightness and wrongness" of the matter are the ones that have Fielding's approval. It is undeniable that the occurrence parallels Shaftesbury's insistence that the moral sense "apprehends the rightness and wrongness of actions without recourse to reasoning"; however, it is possible these instances in the novels are attributable to Fielding's disdain for the metaphysical doctrines of reasoning:

> There is no word in the English language for which I have so great a contempt as for the word reasoning, which, . . . is much in the metaphysics, nay, is indeed its very being.[23]

In consideration of these points, it cannot be denied that Shaftesburyan elements are present in Fielding's work.

---

[21]Ibid., pp. 70-71.

[22]Macallister, Fielding, p. 21.

[23]Champion, January 5, 1739-40. In The Complete Works of Henry Fielding, Esq., Vol. XV (New York: Croscup and Sterling Co., 1902), ed. William E. Henley, p. 138.

But these elements are, in general, commonly-held views, rather than exclusively Shaftesburyan. Actually, it is very unlikely that Fielding and Shaftesbury could have been in agreement ethically by virtue of their attitudes and ideas on religion. Shaftesbury was a deist and Fielding opposes many of the deistic doctrines. The primary aim of the deist was to base religion on truth discovered by reason. Consequently, they rejected the idea of Christian revelation and attacked the credibility of the Bible. They also dismissed the concept of "reward and punishment" and depicted God as lazy and uninterested in the affairs of man. On these points Fielding based his rejection of the Deists.

> And supposing that the deist, . . . could carry his point, supposing that the belief of a future state, . . . could be rooted out of the world, . . . suppose the deist could establish, . . . that we could believe the Deity a lazy, unactive being, regardless of the affairs of man, that the soul of man, when his body dieth, lives no more, . . .
>
> What advantage therefore to mankind can the deist propose, by endeavoring to rob him of these delights, however ill-grounded they may be, nay, what amends can be made us for doing so?[24]

Based on Fielding's objection to the Deists, which includes an unfavorable portrait in Tom Jones in the character of Square, argument for a deistic influence on his ethics is weak. Argument for the heritage of the low-church Anglican tradition is more solid. Furthermore, Fielding's admiration

---

[24]Ibid., pp. 164-165. Champion, January 22, 1739-40.

for the work of the low-church divines is quite apparent in his work.

The Latitudinarians[25] (as these divines were called) gained prominence during the late seventeenth century. Their doctrines are a reaction against the theories of Hobbes, the neo-Stoics and the Calvinists. During the eighteenth century, their influence spread, providing the primary opposition to Mandeville, the Deists, and the Methodists. Theirs was a pragmatic Christianity stressing the natural goodness of man and his potential for moral perfection through the exercise of social benevolence. Described as "modified Pelagian,"[26] their doctrine emphasizes the improvement of man without the intervention of God.[27] Charitable actions motivated by benevolence are the major elements of their creed. Moreover, they are less concerned with the dogmatic and mysterious side of religion that with the moral. Consequently, faith and knowledge were significant only as virtues which led to morality.

R. S. Crane gives a comprehensive account of the Latitudinarians with whom Fielding is closely associated. He lists four principle aspects of their ethical and philosophical doctrines: (1) Virtue as universal benevolence, (2) Benevolence as feeling, (3) Benevolence as "natural" to man, and (4) The

---

[25]For a summary of Latitudinarian doctrine and philosophy, see Irwin, The Tentative Realist, pp. 8-15; Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, pp. 14-25; Macallister, Fielding, pp. 18-23.

[26]Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, p. 14.

[27]Macallister, Fielding, p. 18.

Self-approving Joy.[28] Explaining that the primary purpose of the early Latitudinarians was to discredit Puritan doctrines concerning the nature of God and the value of good works, Crane quotes from Joseph Glanville, a supporter of these clergymen:

> . . . they appr'd also to assert and vindicate the Divine Goodness and love of Men in its freedom and extent, against those Doctrines, that made his Love, Fondness; and his Justice, Cruelty and represented God as the Eternal Hater of the far greatest part of his reasonable Creatures, and the designer of their Ruine, for the exaltation of meer Power and arbitrary Will . . .[29]

Additionally, Crane uses Glanville to explain the doctrines of the Latitudinarians:

> That Goodness is the chief moral Perfection: That Power without Goodness is Tyranny; and Wisdom without it, is but Craft and Subtilty; and Justice, Cruelty when destitute of Goodness. . . . And because Morality was despised by the elevated Fantasticks, . . . those Divines labor'd in the asserting and vindicating of this. Teaching the necessity of Moral Vertues; That Christianity is the highest improvement of them; . . . That the power of it consists in self-will and ruling our passions, and moderating our appetites and doing the works of real Righteousness toward God and our Neighbour.[30]

The parallels between Fielding and the Latitudinarians are apparent. Using Crane's study as a background, these parallels become more obvious. Battestin observes that the

---

[28]R. S. Crane, "Suggestion Toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling,'" English Literary History 1 (December 1934):205-227.

[29]Ibid., p. 209.

[30]Ibid., 210.

characteristics of Fielding's good nature correspond with three of the principal aspects of the Latitudinarian creed: (1) a "natural" benevolism (feeling of charity) within the heart, (2) universal benevolence as its expression, (3) emotions of compassion and pity as motivation for benevolent actions.[31]

As with Fielding, charity was of great importance to the Latitudinarians. For them, charity consists of kindness to all men simply because they are men; it connotes a desire to relieve the suffering of others and alter, if possible, destructive social conditions. It is expressed through the practice of that universal love of mankind which embraces both friend and foe. The sermons of the divines, frequently quoted in the Champion and the Covent Garden Journal, and those of Barrow and Tillotson particularly, often treated the subject of charity. The exercise of charity, they felt, brings satisfaction to the performer, and is the duty of all men:

> How much better it is to do good, to be really useful and beneficial to others, and how much more clearly and certainly our Duty, . . .[32]

And Fielding's much admired Isaac Barrow:

> We are indispensably obliged to those duties, because the best of our natural inclinations prompt us to the performance of them, especially those of pity and benignity, which are manifestly discernible in all, but most powerful and vigorous in the best natures; and which, questionless, by the most wise and good Author of our beings were planted therein both as monitors to direct and as spurs to the performance of our duty.[33]

---

[31]Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, p. 70.

[32]Crane, "Suggestions Towards a Genealogy," p. 211.

[33]Ibid., p. 223.

The Latitudinarian emphasis on the passions and affections which motivate charity is another commonality between them and Fielding. They insisted that the passions, neither good nor evil in themselves, could be channelled to promote either virtue or vice, since the passions are the force behind all actions. Like Fielding, they opposed the neo-Stoicism which was insensitive to passions. They consistently declared that effective benevolence could not exist independent of the emotions of compassion and pity, and rather than suppressing those emotions, we should view them, when they are present, as indicative of genuine goodness.[34] Furthermore, it is the passions directed towards goodness, rather than reason, which will ultimately result in virtue, for:

> . . . until they begin to move, our Reason is but like a Chariot when the wheels are off, that is never like to perform the Journey.[35]

Of course, the primary characteristic which connects Fielding with the Latitudinarian tradition is good nature. Their definition of good nature is not as all-encompassing as Fielding's. Moreover, their emphasis on the quality is less than his, since the contexts for its expression are different. Nonetheless, it is still a very important concept for them, and is defined in a manner similar to that of Fielding's, in the following comment.

> God has implanted in our very Frame and Make, a compassionate Sense of the Sufferings and Misfortunes of other People, which disposes

---

[34]Ibid., p. 217.

[35]Ibid., p. 215

> us to contribute to their Relief; so that when we see any of our Fellow-Creatures in Circumstances of Distress, we are naturally, . . . inclined to be helpful to them. . . . (And) as all the Actions of Nature are sweet and pleasant, so there is none which gives a good man a greater, or more solid, or lasting Pleasure than this of doing good. . . .[36]

Essentially, the convictions of the Latitudinarians were easily adaptable to the social arena, providing for Fielding a set of guidelines on moral conduct void of theological complexities. That is not to say that the doctrines of the Latitudinarians were non-theological, but, rather, that Fielding was able to disintangle the religious aspects and to then glean from Latitudinarian thought significant points which he could include in a philosophy for the edification of the society.

The Latitudinarian influence on Fielding is stronger than that of Shaftesbury. The points on which the two men agree are those which are common beliefs of the era, the most important of which was the importance of the emotions as a basis of morality. The classical ideas on social and moral perfection, and Lockean principles on human nature, the nature of God and the nature of morality, all provide a foundation for Fielding's concepts of morality.

Notwithstanding Fielding's close affinity with the Latitudinarians, in the end no one source can with certainty be offered as a definite influence on his social morality. Though his similarities to and his admiration of the Latitudi-

---

[36]Ibid., p. 225.

narians are undeniable, the few points of departure[37] between the two suggest that the exertion of Latitudinarian influence was limited to what was useful for the moral statements Fielding wished to make. Their views, along with other ideas common in the age reinforced Fielding's own belief in the natural goodness of man, and his capacity for improvement through moral education. Because Fielding believed this, he is relentless in efforts to contribute to man's moral education through his writing.

---

[37]Miller points out that Fielding was unconcerned with religious concepts of morality, at least in the novels. This explains, according to Miller, Fielding's tolerance of certain "sins of the senses." See Essays on Miscellanies, p. 80.

CHAPTER II

FIELDING'S MORAL CONCEPTS

While it is not necessary to be cognizant of the ethical principles of Fielding in order to enjoy his novels, it is nonetheless necessary to be aware of those principles if the exact intent of the novels is to be understood. Though the novels clearly suggest (and sometimes state) Fielding's attitudes toward the morality of what his characters say and do, they seldom suggest a basis for his approval or disapproval. It is perhaps ignorance of what was for Fielding moral behavior that caused him to be labelled "immoral" for almost two centuries. Fielding's contemporaries had this opinion of both him and his novels. Samuel Johnson, the most respected critic of the late eighteenth century, is said to have found all of Fielding's fiction, with the exception of Amelia, "morally reprehensible."[1] Robert Alter explains that the basis for the moral objection to Tom Jones, which Johnson considered a "corrupt book,"[2] is Fielding's failure to punish Tom for his sexual affairs and the fact that they produce no far-reaching moral consequences.

> Johnson's sense of corruptness in Tom Jones stems not only from the fact that Fielding fails to punish Tom, . . . but also from Fielding's general representation of sex,

---

[1]Robert Alter, Fielding and the Nature of the Novel (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 7.

[2]Ibid., p. 8. Quoted from Johnsonian Miscellanies.

> promiscuous or otherwise, as skylarking, not skirting the abyss.[3]

While it is true that Tom is not "punished," it is also true that Fielding does not condone his imprudent sexual adventures, a fact which will be discussed in later chapters.

This chapter will detail the moral system of Fielding by discussing the basic components of that system, as they are expressed in his essays and some of his poems. The use of poetry is limited in this discussion because, with the exception of a few, the poems are more personal and do not offer significant insight into Fielding's ethical views. Those that are used, however, are useful in defining what Fielding does approve of, though they are often lacking in the concise examples and explanations that are found in the essays.

In endeavoring to set forth the ethos of Henry Fielding one must recognize that he was not a systematic moral philosopher and that he never systematically set down a body of purely religious moral standards. Nevertheless, although not those of a theologically oriented moralist, his viewpoints were grounded upon his religious beliefs. However, his moral instruction was aimed primarily at the social behavior and responsibilities of the individual; therefore, the morality we speak of when discussing Fielding's moral standards is that morality necessary for ensuring the good of the general society, and so might be termed "social morality." The ethical system of Fielding is essentially a two-sided construction, treating both the posi-

---

[3]Fielding and the Novel, pp. 8-9.

tive elements which contribute to morality and their negative counterparts which add to the degeneration of the society. These negative qualities are not always exact and obvious antitheses to the positive virtues which Fielding promotes, but their presence in the society could effect a state of moral confusion.

As was stated in the Introduction, it was Fielding's belief that man is primarily a social animal. By virtue of this fact, only in social communication, or society, could any form of morality be displayed. That is to say simply that only in intercourse with his fellow human beings could man be expected to display his full potential for goodness (or evil):

> Man is generally represented as an Animal formed for and delighting in Society. In this State alone, it is said, his various Talents can be exerted, his numberless Necessities relieved, the Dangers he is exposed to can be avoided, and many of the Pleasures be eagerly affects, enjoyed.[4]

Because society is the only possible arena in which man can perform and be observed, it is important that his conduct be such that it would commend him as a moral and honest individual. Fielding explains that society requires that men be "inoffensive" to one another in order to assure their usefulness and beneficiality to one another. It is necessary that we find in society some pleasure or advantage--something not to be found in an unsocial or solitary state.[5] This idea is one Fielding

---

[4]Henry Fielding, "Essay on Conversation," In Miscellanies, Vol. I, ed. by Henry Knight Miller (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1972), p. 119.

[5]Ibid., p. 122.

finds in many ancient philosophers.[6] Believing in the concept of "universal order," Fielding, like most of his contemporaries (Johnson and Richardson among them), saw society as a miniature replica of the universal arrangement of things.[7] Men of title, rank, and birth being parallel to the upper ranks of the divine order of the universe as a whole, their conduct was of extreme importance in terms of its general effect on the order of things. If these men were immoral, the entire society was affected. This is not to say that Fielding had no regard for the lower classes of society. To the contrary, he was greatly concerned with the plight of the working poor who contributed to the operation of the social structure.[8] However, since they were not in a position in which their conduct might be under constant scrutiny, or emulated, they were rarely the target of his invective. Again, this is not to say that he did not find immorality among them--his novels attest to the fact that he did; however, he found more damage being done by the manners and morals of those in "position," those whose morals might be accepted by virtue of their "greatness" rather than their goodness.

Before proceeding to discuss the individual components of Fielding's ethic, it is necessary to consider his general view of man. Rejecting the somewhat popular notion that man in

---

[6]Ibid., p. 119. Miller cites Aristotle, Cicero, and Marcus Aurelius as among Fielding's sources. See n. 2.

[7]For a summary of Augustan ideals and beliefs see Humphreys' The Augustan World and Rogers' The Augustan Vision.

[8]Fielding's social pamphlets, "An Enquiry into the Late Increase in Robbers" and "A Proposal for Making an Effectual Provision for the Poor" illustrate his concern for social conditions of the poor.

general is inherently evil, a theory advanced by Hobbes and his followers, Fielding believed that man's natural inclination was toward good. In many of his essays he quotes ancient philosophical sources, as well as seventeenth-century divines such as Isaac Barrow and John Tillotson, on this point, and asserts his agreement.[9] Still, he confronts the obvious fact that not all men are good. To explain the existence of evil, he turns to the concept of "Original Sin" and to what Battestin calls the "theory of predominant passions,"[10] a theory deriving from the ancients which was prevalent during the eighteenth century. The theory results from the belief that human nature consists of a mixture of conflicting passions which are constantly battling one another for dominance. This mixture and the resulting conflict account for the contradictions and inconsistencies which are displayed in the characters of individuals. Fielding's poem, "To John Hayes, Esq;" depicts this conflict:

> How Passions blended on each other fix,
> How Vice with Virtues, Faults with Graces mix;
> How Passions opposite, as sour to sweet,
> Shall in one Bosom at one Moment meet.
> With various Luck for Victory contend,
> And now shall carry, and now lose their End.[11]

It is the responsibility of the individual to direct and control these passions through the exercise of reason and will. That this is a conviction which Fielding holds is evident when

---

[9]See for example, The Champion, March 27, 1740 or The Covent Garden Journal, Essay No. 29.

[10]Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, p. 59.

[11]Miscellanies, Vol. I, p. 53.

he says:

> In the worthiest human Minds, there are some small innate Seeds of Malignity, which it is greatly in our Power either to suffocate and suppress, or to forward and improve their growth, 'till they blossom and bear their poisonous Fruit; . . .[12]

Nonetheless, because the passions were believed to be the motive force of all actions, the actions of the individual were considered indicative of the "ruling" passion, at the moment, in his nature. Therefore, the person characterized as "good" might have love as the constant ruling passion in his nature, whereas the "evil" individual is most often controlled by the passion of pride, which is synonmous with self-love.[13]

Fielding's acceptance of this theory possibly led him to attribute the disparity of nature found in individuals with the same heredity, environment, and education to "some unacquired, original Distinction" in the individual himself.[14] Because of this he subsequently doubts the ability of the inherently evil to change.[15] In the "Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men" he gives up on those individuals he describes as natural "villains":

---

[12]Henry Fielding (Sir Alexander Drawcansier), "Essay No. 16" In The Covent Garden Journal, ed. Gerard Edward Jensen (New Haven: Yale University Press, and London: Oxford University Press, 1915), p. 232.

[13]Miscellanies, Vol. I, General Introduction, pp. xxxii-xxxiii.

[14]"Characters of Men" In Miscellanies, Vol. I, p. 153.

[15]This conviction is also expressed in The Champion, March 6, 1740 and March 13, 1740.

> I think we may with Justice suspect, at least so far as to deny him our Confidence, that a Man whom we once knew to be a villain, remains a Villain still.[16]

This attitude represents a contradictory departure from Fielding's usually optimistic view of man's ability to use his free will and reason to realize his potential for goodness. It is a conflict for which he appears not to have found a simple resolution; or rather, one he simply felt had no solution. Consequently, he sometimes takes one position on the issue of man's ability to reform and at other times he takes the opposite position.

Of course, Fielding felt that the cause of the existence of these "villains" was corrupt custom and education. He believed in man's potential for goodness, but he saw this potential being thwarted by the institutions of society which contributed to individual corruption. Battestin says that Fielding believed that man's potential for goodness could be realized "if only he were assisted by the institutions of society and persuaded by the powerful incentives of religion to a proper use of his reason and will."[17] Instead, the institutions nurtured the dominant passions of the individual and rarely altered his natural disposition, "teaching rather to conceal Vices than to cultivate Virtue."[18] Because of this conviction, Fielding consistently attacks those institutions (education and

---

[16]Miscellanies, Vol. I, p. 176.

[17]Battestin, Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, p. 84.

[18]"Characters of Men," p. 154.

politics, particularly) which contributed to the moral deterioration of society. Nevertheless, Fielding's attacks are not limited to those institutions which nuture corruption in men; he also attacks those qualities which constitute ill-nature, that is, pride, avarice, vanity, and ambition, to name a few.[19] An individual could hardly commit immoral actions unless his character contained one or another of these qualities. Vanity, especially, took on a variety of forms against which Fielding constantly sought to warn the good individual.

Finally, dismissing those naturally inclined to evil as lost souls, Fielding's primary concern in his moralizing is to define and distinguish true virtue from false virtue, the "moral" man from the "deceiver." By setting down characteristics of both, he sought to provide practical rules for the moral and social guidance of the average individual. The dominant concepts in Fielding's moral system are few. Appearing quite uncomplicated, they can be summed up, as he himself did many times, by the use of the Golden Rule: "Do unto others . . . ." Among the cardinal virtues for Fielding are temperance, prudence, charity and good nature. Temperance is manifest socially through the control of the passions; prudence through the use of reason as a discriminating factor in all affairs of life, most importantly in discriminating between moral good and evil. The virtues of good nature and charity are the

---

[19]Both essays "Art of Conversation" and "Characters of Men" are attacks on those qualities and institutions which Fielding saw as corruptive to the society.

most important elements of Fielding's moral construct and deserve more detailed discussion. The all-encompassing virtue is that of good nature, and as a concept, it is more complex than the whole of the moral system. It is a social, moral, and religious virtue. Socially, it seeks to promote the well-being of all men; morally, it makes man better in himself; religiously, it comprehends the duty of the Christian. It is this concept which describes the moral individual for Fielding, and its components comprise that which is necessary for the assurance of the good society. This is because the components of good nature dictate the actions of its possessor and therefore necessarily indicate what his behavior should be.

Good nature, or benevolence, as it is sometimes called, is concerned with good works and benevolent emotions; it results when the benevolent passions dominate. At times, good nature and benevolence represent, for Fielding, two distinct qualities; at other times, they are one and the same. Good nature, as a distinct virtue, is defined many times and in various ways by Fielding. In one of his earliest definitions it is:

> . . . that benevolent and amiable temper of Mind which disposes us to feel the Misfortunes, and enjoy the Happiness of others; and consequently pushes us on to promote the latter, and prevent the former; and that without any abstract contemplation on the Beauty of Virtue, and without the Allurements or Terrors of Religion.[20]

---

[20]"Characters of Men," In Miscellanies, Vol. I, p. 158.

In a later poem entitled "Of Good Nature," he defines it simply as the "glorious Lust of doing Good."[21] Of course, these definitions do not give a comprehensive explanation of the concept of good nature,[22] nor are they indicative of how the concept fits into Fielding's standards for social morality. What they do indicate is those qualities Fielding expected the moral man to possess. "Selfless compassion" may be an apt phrase to sum up the concept. Its importance may be assessed from the following comment made in 1740:

> Indeed the passion of love or benevolence . . . seems to be the only human passion that is in itself simply and absolutely good, . . . and in a society acting up to the rules of Christianity, no danger could arise from the highest excess of this virtue; nay the more liberally it was indulged, and the more extensively it was expanded, the more would it contribute to the honour of the individual, and to the happiness of the whole.[23]

Despite his assertion that good nature is necessary for salvation, Fielding recognized that good nature itself was not self-sufficient. It needs the guidance of both religion and reason to make it truly effective as a social virtue. In a definition of good nature appearing in The Champion, March 27, 1740, Fielding stresses the importance of reason, or good judgment:

---

[21]Miscellanies, Vol. I, p. 31.

[22]Miller explains that it is not exactly possible to break down the component elements of the concept. They may be categorized as "intellectual" and "emotive," with Fielding's emphasis on the latter. See note 37, Essays on Miscellanies, p. 67.

[23]"Enquiry Into the Cause of the Late Increase in Robbers," In Rawson, Henry Fielding, pp. 137-138.

> Good nature requires a distinguishing faculty, which is another word for judgment, and is perhaps the sole boundary between wisdom and folly; it is impossible for a fool, who hath no distinguishing faculty, to be good natured.[24]

Many of his essays admonish the good-natured individual to be discriminate in choosing the recipients of his compassion lest he be taken advantage of by the insolent or the truly unscrupulous individual. Extending compassion to these persons cannot be beneficial to the society because there exists the danger of encouraging insolent and unscrupulous behavior. In addition, the simplicity and vulnerability which are characteristic of the good-natured person make him more susceptible to the deceits of others; therefore, the exercise of good judgment is extremely important. Fielding devotes an entire essay, his "Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men," to the guidance of the moral man in discerning that "falseness" of character to which he is most susceptible. Unfortunately, good judgment alone is not completely dependable as an assurance for benevolent actions; therefore, religious support is imperative.

In terms of the necessity of religion for the effective expression of good nature, Fielding's stated views are somewhat ambiguous. Critics nevertheless assert the religious foundation of the concept.[25] Claiming that Fielding places the con-

---

[24]The Champion, March 27, 1740, Henley ed. XV, p. 258.

[25]Irwin and Battestin cite Anglican low-church doctrine as influencing Fielding's concept of good nature. James A. Work's essay, "Henry Fielding, Christian Censor," In The Age of Johnson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949) establishes a Christian foundation for Fielding's moral concepts.

cept in a Christian context, Battestin asserts that it corresponds to the "Christian ideal of the agape," which teaches the forgiving of injuries.[26] Though the contention of the religious context of good nature may be confirmed by Fielding's identification of God as the "best natured being in the universe,"[27] or by his observation that good nature is "that heavenly frame of soul of which Jesus Christ Himself was the most perfect pattern,"[28] it is necessary to note that he saw good nature as essentially independent of religion. Of the two, religion is the ultimate imperative for moral behavior, going beyond good nature in inspiring a more complete morality. However, for Fielding's social morality its main significance lay in its function as a complementary force to assure a more effective morality.[29]

A look at Fielding's comments on Charity provides another assessment of the role of religion in the over-all concept of good nature. Charity, in Fielding's view, is the most important component of good nature. The exercise of charity is the most conspicuous mark of the good-natured individual. In many of his writings he insists that true charity, which is essential to salvation, is the product of a compassion natural

---

[26]Battestin, Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, pp. 75-76.

[27]Fielding, quoting Shaftesbury in The Champion, March 27, 1740, Henley edition, XV, p. 260.

[28]"Characters of Men," Miscellanies, Vol. I, p. 159.

[29]The Champion, March 27, 1740, Henley ed., XV, p. 258.

to man. In essay Number 39 of the Covent Garden Journal, he insists that charity is the Duty of the Christian.[30] Later, he maintains that it is the supreme and indispensable obligation of every Christian. Nothing, he continues, can give greater happiness to man than the knowledge of having relieved the distress or contributed to the happiness of his fellow man. In essay Number 44, he insists that unless a man is charitable, "all his other good Deeds cannot render him acceptable in the Sight of his Creator and Redeemer."[31] Moreover, Fielding is in agreement with those ancient philosophers who concluded that the individual void of charitableness is acting contrary to his natural disposition. Quoting various ancient sources,[32] he concludes that if the assertions made by these sources are true, then:

> A person void of charity is unworthy of the Appellation of a Christian, . . . he hath no Pretence to either Goodness or Justice, or even to the Character of Humanity; that he is in honest Truth, an Infidel, a Rogue, and a Monster, and ought to be expelled not only from the society of Christians, but of Men.[33]

From these comments, the religious importance of the charitable disposition is clear. Yet, chairty is more important to Fielding in a social context, for it is in the social world that its expression can be witnessed. Consequently, the

---

[30]Ibid., pp. 357-358.

[31]Ibid., p. 9.

[32]Among the sources Fielding cites are Cicero, Grotius, and the New Testament, The Covent Garden Journal, No. 39, pp. 354-355.

[33]"Essay No. 39," The Covent Garden Journal, p. 358.

essays on charity set guidelines as to the proper beneficiary of charity, as well as outline the proper motives for the exercise of this virtue. Concerning the proper recipients of charity, Fielding sets guidelines which the modern reader may have difficulty accepting. In the Champion, he designates the following as those to benefit from charity:

> (1) Those of genteel birth who have been reduced, due to a foolish pursuit of luxury, to a state of distress and poverty
>
> (2) Impoverished relations of those who have stood in opposition to unjust political administrations
>
> (3) Those professional persons who have lost their wealth
>
> (4) The artist
>
> (5) Those imprisoned for indebtedness[34]

For the modern reader, it may appear unjust to designate as proper objects of charity those who have squandered their wealth, though upon occasion there may be little objection to charitable actions towards debtors. However, it must be remembered that for Fielding's age it was the upper class that was expected to contribute the most to society. For this reason it was imperative that it be capable of making that contribution, even if charity must be extended to make such action possible. On the other hand, Fielding makes no comment concerning charitable benefactions to the poor, except to make a

---

[34]The Champion, February 16, 1740, Henley ed. XV, p. 205.

somewhat vehement objection to extending charity to beggars. These, he believes, "deserve punishment more than relief" since they make no contribution to society, offering neither labor nor wealth.[35] However, it is obvious from the essays of the Covent Garden Journal that Fielding does not deny provisions of charity for the poor. In essay Number 39 he concludes, after a reiteration of the ideas of ancient philosophers, that "those who want, have by the Laws of Nature A RIGHT to a Relief from the Superfluities of those who abound; by those Laws therefore it is not left to the Option of the Rich, whether they will relieve the Poor and the Distressed, but those who refuse to do it become unjust Men, and in reality deserve to be considered as ROGUES AND ROBBERS OF THE PUBLIC."[36]

As has been stated earlier, charity is the one most important component of good nature. Fielding felt that charity, more than any other quality, is necessary for salvation. However, only true charity could possibly ensure salvation. True charity is distinguished from false charity in a number of ways, but the most important distinction is motive. Essay Number 44 treats the question of motives behind actions of charity. In the essay, Fielding cites various unacceptable motives: vanity, whim, weakness, the desire to be fashionable, the desire to resist importunity, even extravagance and folly. He goes on to say that charity performed for the expiation of sins and crimes

---

[35]Ibid.

[36]Ibid., p. 358.

is also unacceptable. That motive for charity is often derived from fear, and fulfilled, more often than not, on the deathbed in the form of a will. There is little question that charitable acts of that type, in Fielding's system, are not manifestations of the desire to do good. Evidence of Fielding's objections to these motives may be found in his offering of the following considerations: (1) the truly benevolent person does not delay his charity until the moment of death, (2) the man with no compassion for his neighbor "whom he hath seen" can hardly have pity for those he will never see, and (3) the man whose will ignores his friends and relatives, indicating a lack of love for them, can certainly love no one else.[37]

Fielding's qualifications concerning true versus false motives for charity are in direct accord with the manner in which he sought to educate the moral man. That education also included attacks on the deterrents to the accomplishment of the ideal society. One of those "deterrents" is the tendency of the average man to be incapable of distinguishing virtue. Therefore, instruction in the distinction between goodness and greatness was essential; moreover, there must be a further distinction between true and false greatness.

Fielding categorizes these distinctions, in terms of individuals, as "the Great, the Good, and the Great and Good."[38]

---

[37]The Covent Garden Journal, pp. 12-13.

[38]Preface to Miscellanies, p. 12.

Of this first distinction, Fielding explains:

> . . . we often confounded the Ideas of Goodness and Greatness together, or rather include the former in our Ideas of the latter. . . . In Reality, no Qualities can be more distinct: for as it cannot be doubted but that Benevolence, Honour, Honesty, and Charity, make a good Man; and that Parts, Courage, are the efficient Qualities of a Great Man, so must it be confess'd, that the Ingredients which compose the former of the Characters, bear no Analogy to, nor Dependence on those which constitute the latter. A Man may therefore be Great without being Good, or Good without being Great.[39]

He goes on to explain that while there is a distinction between these qualities, there is nothing to prevent their union, their existence within the mind of one individual. The combination of these qualities yields the truly great man, which Fielding calls the "true Sublime in Human Nature."[40] This individual is described in the poem, "Of True Greatness":

> To no Profession, Party, Place confin'd
> True Greatness lives but in the nobel Mind;
> Him constant through each various Scene attends,
> Fierce to his Foes, and faithful to his Friends.
> . . . . . .
> Lives there a Man, by Nature form'd to please
> To think with Dignity, express with Ease,
> Upright in Principle, in Council strong,
> Prone not to change, nor obstinate too long:
> . . . . . .
> Aw'd not by Fear, by Prejudice not swayed,
> By Fashion led not, nor by Whim betrayed,
> By Candour only bias'd, who shall dare
> To view and judge and speak Men as they are,
> In him (if such there be) is Greatness shewn, . . .[41]

---

[39]Ibid., pp. 11-12.

[40]Ibid., p. 12.

[41]Miscellanies, Vol. I, p. 29.

The Good man, Fielding explains, falls short of this "perfection" as he "often partakes too little of Parts or Courage, to have any Pretensions to Greatness."[42] Still, this does not diminish his merit. However, it is the Great man who is the recipient of Fielding's indictment. This character contains all those qualities--pride, ostentation, insolence, cruelty, ambition, vanity, etc.--which endanger mankind's chances for moral perfection.

The problem of recognizing deceit is paramount in Fielding's ethical system. Deceit is inherent in some individuals, and therefore represents a selfish force promoting chaos and immorality. For Fielding, these individuals are often considered "great" by the common man.

The false claim to greatness of these individuals poses a moral threat to society. Because these "sinners" are wrongly honored by the public, claiming praise and admiration due the truly virtuous, they are more likely to advance mischief than goodness. The failure of the average man to see through their pretensions requires that they be exposed by the moralist. This is the intent of Fielding's "Essay on the Knowledge of the Characters of Men." The essay, one of Fielding's many attacks on the "great" man ("Of True Greatness," "Of Good Nature," and "Essay on Nothing" also attack false greatness; and Jonathan Wild, an attack on Robert Walpole,[43] is Fielding's most famous

---

[42]Preface to Miscellanies, p. 12.

[43]Miller, General Introduction to Miscellanies, p. xix.

criticism of the great man), provides examples of false greatness; it also maintains that the main characteristic of the great man is hypocrisy.

Hypocrisy, for Fielding, is the "Bane of Virtue, Morality, and Goodness."[44] It is the vice of which his condemnation is most severe. The hypocrite is the master of deceit, claiming the good man as his victim. Miller explains that Fielding distinguishes between two types of hypocrisy, that by which one seeks to gain the good opinion of others in order to exploit them and that by which, through constant censoriousness directed toward others' struggles, one seeks to gain the reputation of a saint.[45] The former type is a result of pure and simple evil, the latter of vanity.

Vanity, manifest through pride and ambition, represents the root of uncharitableness and is the source of social affectation. Therefore, it is a prime target for Fielding's ridicule. One of the main characteristics of the immoral man, the indulgence of vanity, causes confusion, uneasiness, and vexation in the society. Taken to its extreme, it produces the individual ruled by "evil passions," an individual who introduces moral corruption into the society.

These, then, are the important aspects of Fielding's ethical system. As a system of concepts, it entails simply the

---

[44]Preface to Miscellanies, p. 4.

[45]General Introduction to Miscellanies, p. xxxv.

promotion of good nature and its supplementary virtues of temperance, charity, and prudence. It is a two-fold system, seeking not only to promote the moral, but also to undermine the immoral, with the hope that the constant reiteration of what constitutes morality and immorality will eventually bring about a better society.

CHAPTER III

MORAL ATTITUDES DRAMATIZED THROUGH CHARACTERIZATION IN FIELDING'S NOVELS

One of the few aspects of Fielding's novels which does not occasion debate is that they are intentionally didactic. Fielding himself asserts this in the prefaces of his novels, and the manner in which the novels are constructed serves to support it. Fielding accomplishes his didactic aim in a different manner in each of the novels; that is, methods range from light-hearted ridicule of the negatives in his moral system to more serious condemnation of those negatives when they appear in their extreme forms. For example, Joseph Andrews exposes, through ridicule, the foolish vices of human beings.[1] Tom Jones demonstrates, on the other hand, the positive effects of virtuous behavior. Finally, Amelia demonstrates the effect of moral corruption. The vices ridiculed in Joseph Andrews and admonished in Tom Jones are condemned in Amelia as morally corrupt. Each of the novels contrasts these vices against the most important virtues of Fielding's ethical system and seeks, in that manner, to promote those virtues.

Fielding uses various devices to explicate his moral viewpoints. Of these devices, characterization is perhaps the most obvious. It should be mentioned that occasionally some

---

[1]Irwin, The Tentative Realist, pp. 84-85.

scholars have pointed out that the characterization in the novels is essentially weak, that characters do not exist as individuals but only as concretizations of abstract ideas.[2] Fielding, however, was not so much concerned with representing individuals, as he explains:

> "I describe not men, but manners, not an individual, but a species . . . .[3]

Therefore his personae are intended to embody the various components of his ethical principles, or they function simply as instruments to make certain moral statements.

It may be feasible to group the characters from the novels in categories of the good, the bad, and the ridiculous, with the good and bad representing the positives and negatives, respectively, of the moral system. The third group might justifiably be termed "fools," for Fielding ridicules them unmercifully. These characters possess qualities which make them more of a nuisance than a threat to society. They serve as antitypes to the good man and act as warning against the behavior they represent. The ridiculous are represented by Mrs. Slipslop, Lady Booby's maid in Joseph Andrews, Partridge, the schoolmaster in Tom Jones, and Colonel Bath and his sister, Mrs. James, friends of the Booths in Amelia.

---

[2]William Coley, in "The Background of Fielding's Laughter," maintains that Fielding is unsuccessful in characterizing all but the "great but not good" man. F. Holmes Dudden's Henry Fielding: His Life, Works, and Times, sees most of Fielding's characters as lifeless.

[3]Joseph Andrews, III, i, p. 159.

Slipslop's main vice is affectation. Her absurd pretensions to education and social superiority among the servants are seen in the reason she gives for ignoring Fanny, a young woman who grew up in her household:

> "I think I can reflect something of her," answered she, with great dignity, "but I can't remember all the inferior servants in our family."[4]

The misuse and mispronunciation of what she considers "learned" words are common with her, as are her airs of superiority.

Partridge and Mrs. Wilkins are guilty of similar pretensions; he affects more learning than he really has and she considers herself far above her occupational peers. Mrs. Wilkins' feeling of superiority is revealed in the scene following the reading of Allworthy's will:

> "Sure master might have made some difference, methinks, between me and the other servants, . . . 'The servants will find some token to remember me by.' Those were the very words; . . . Ay, ay, I shall remember you for huddling me among the servants."[5]

Colonel Bath and Mrs. James reveal their affectation in their misconceptions of honor and friendship. For the colonel, honor is synomous with fighting. He declares that "A man of honor wears his law by his side."[6] He also believes it his Christian duty to challenge a man for any minor affront in order to defend his honor. His sister, Mrs. James, conceives of friendship as a matter of "ceremony, courtesies, messages,

---

[4]Joseph Andrews, II, xiii, p. 134.

[5]Tom Jones, V. vii, pp. 183-184.

[6]Amelia, IX, iii, p. 120.

and visits," and she is seen visiting Amelia with such formality that she seems a "very distant acquaintance."[7] Still, that these characters prove amusing, does not diminish, in Fielding's view, the seriousness of their affectations:

> But though it arises from one spring only, when we consider the infinite streams into which this one branches, we shall presently cease to admire at the copious field it affords to an observer.[8]

In addition to this primary grouping of characters, there is a subdivision of the good characters, represented by Allworthy, in Tom Jones, and by Dr. Harrison, in Amelia. These are Fielding's embodiment of the "good and great," his "true sublime of human nature." Their virtues include all those required of the good man with the added qualities of wisdom and intelligence. That Fielding considered such individuals rare explains their scarcity in the novels. Miller suggests that this scarcity reflects Fielding's concern with the qualities of the average man rather than with the embodiment of the "somewhat awesome dignity of the true sublime."[9] Continuing, he points out that the "good and great" man represents, implicitly, the "ideal balance" of qualities which good men could use as a morally inspiring model, but which are such that few men in common life need develop them.[10]

A second grouping of characters, which Fielding had not depicted in previous novels, is one that appears in Amelia.

---

[7]Amelia, IV, vi, pp. 189-190.

[8]Joseph Andrews, Author's Preface, p. 10.

[9]Miller, Essays on Miscellanies, p. 48.

[10]Ibid.

These are characters who have both good and evil qualities. Colonel James and Mrs. Ellison are the primary representatives of this type. They both possess the generosity which usually is an indication of good nature. However, as the story progresses, the badness of their natures overwhelms the fragmentary goodness Fielding initially allows them. Humphreys implies, in his Introduction to the novel, that James and Mrs. Ellison are a result of Fielding's desire to provide a more realistic representation of human nature and to show the effect of a morally corrupt society on a potentially good individual.[11]

This chapter is concerned with only two groups in Fielding's cast of characters, the good and the bad. This is a necessary limitation, as the intent of the study is to examine those characters who embody the principles that are the foundation of Fielding's moral beliefs. It is through these characters that the positives and negatives in Fielding's moral system are presented, and, therefore, the need to concentrate on those characters who demonstrate the main principles of the moral construct, that is, good nature and charity, and the necessity of religion and prudence as correlatives of these virtues. The antitheses of these primary virtues will be discussed as they are displayed in Fielding's immoral characters. Hypocrisy, in its various forms, is the primary vice of the immoral individual. Egoism is also the cause of much immoral behavior and is discussed as it appears in many minor, as well

---

[11] Amelia, pp. xi-xii.

as major, characters throughout the novels.

Regarded by Fielding as the cardinal virtue in any moral person, the idea of good nature is one of the most important elements in his moral construct and plays a central role in all of his novels. Many critics agree that each of the novels may be viewed as an attempt to embody and define this quality so as to recommend it to Fielding's readers.[12] Battestin explains that for Fielding, the completely moral man

> . . . was by nature compassionate, selfless, and benevolent—his heart so open and innocent that its generous impulses needed, for his own sake and that of society, to be directed and controlled by reason. This man wanted no other inducements to morality than his own benevolent disposition. His love for humanity naturally expressed itself in acts of charity, the supreme virtue and the sum of religion. Without charity, faith and knowledge and ritual were dead and insufficient to salvation.[13]

This definition is essential to an understanding of the good characters as depicted in the novels (especially Tom).

By Fielding's definition, good nature disposes its possessor to "feel the misfortunes and enjoy the happiness of others":[14] it is spontaneous, adhering to the dictates of neither religion nor philosophy. The novels offer various

---

[12]This point is made by Irwin, John Middleton Murry in "Fielding's 'Sexual Ethic' in Tom Jones," and Sean Shesgreen in Literary Portraits in the Novels of Henry Fielding. (Dekalb, Ill: Northern Illinois University Press, 1972.)

[13]Battestin, The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, p. 84.

[14]"Characters of Men," p. 158.

instances (despite the fact that, collectively as well as in the individual novels, the bad characters outnumber the good) of this quality. Many minor characters, especially in Joseph Andrews, display it--the postilion who is the only one willing to assist Joseph on the road after he has been robbed, and the pedlar who lends Adams his last bit of money to help settle a debt. The number of spontaneous characters lessens in each novel, however. As the social milieu of the novels changes to depict high society, the instances of natural goodness occur less often. Middleton Murry seems to feel that such instances in Joseph Andrews represent Fielding's attempt to show that good nature is as frequent in low society as in high, and that this particular "generosity of soul" is independent of social position.[15]

Fielding's exemplars of goodness are Parson Adams, Tom Jones, and Will and Amelia Booth. Some critics see Booth as a weak example of the good natured;[16] nevertheless, he does display many of the traits of the good natured. More importantly, he is the embodiment of Fielding's belief that good nature without the complementary force of religion is insufficient as an inducement to morality. For despite his goodness, his religious beliefs are shrouded in uncertainty:

---

[15]John Middleton Murry, "Fielding's 'Sexual Ethic' in Tom Jones" In Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays ed. Ronald Paulson (New York: Prentice-Hall, 1962), p. 89.

[16]Hamilton Macallister, in Fielding, sees Booth as "hopelessly passive." George Sherburn's essay "Fielding's Amelia: An Interpretation" defends Booth's character.

> . . . Mr. Booth, though he was in his heart an extreme well-wisher to religion . . . yet his notions of it were very slight and uncertain. . . . In short, poor Booth imagined that a larger share of misfortunes had fallen to his lot than he had merited.[17]

This religious uncertainty, according to Sherburn, produces in Booth a lack of moral courage.[18] Booth ascribes his doubts concerning religion to his belief that the passions are the only motivation for human actions:

> Indeed, I was never a rash disbeliever; my chief doubt was founded on this--that, as men appeared to me to act entirely from their passions, their actions could have neither merit . . . demerit.[19]

Until he is strengthened by religion, his morality is weak in foundation, despite his good nature, and he is subject to moral lapses.

Adams and Jones embody more explicitly Fielding's belief in the instinctive goodness of man as an inducement to moral action, a quality which in Tom Jones becomes "a kind of benevolent disposition which is gratified by contributing to the happiness of others."[20] It is this quality which is the redeeming virtue of Tom. Fielding's description of Tom closely parallels his definition of good nature:

> Mr. Jones had somewhat about him which, . . . doth certainly inhabit some human breasts; whose use is not so properly to

---

[17]Amelia, I, iii, p. 14.

[18]George Sherburn, "Fielding's Amelia: An Interpretation," In Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 150.

[19]Amelia, XII, v, p. 288.

[20]Tom Jones, VI, ii, p. 201.

> distinguish right from wrong, as to prompt and incite them to the former, and to restrain and withhold them from the latter.[21]

Of course, here Fielding is admitting that Tom, although inherently good, lacks prudence, the guidance of good judgment. All of his moral indiscretions stem from the absence of prudence, thus proving the necessity of this virtue as a complement to good nature. In the instance of Tom's first involvement with Molly Seagrim, he is unaware that he has been seduced. Molly had been the pursuer:

> So little had she of modesty that Tom had more regard for her virtue than she herself. . . . so when she perceived his backwardness she herself grew proportionately forward; . . . In the conduct of this matter Molly so well played her part that Jones attributed the conquest entirely to himself, and considered the young woman as one who had yielded to the violent attacks of his passion.[22]

Tom's acceptance of the blame for the incident is not only a result of Molly's good acting, but also of his inability to distinguish her self-interested submission from true generosity.

Fielding's description of Adams identifies him as the consummate example of the average moral man, even more so as he combines the qualities of both good nature and religion. Adams' simplicity (which Fielding saw as a problem for the good individual because it made him susceptible to deception) is reinforced by his religion, which would not allow him to suspect evil in any individual:

---

[21]Ibid., IV, vi, p. 129.

[22]Ibid., IV, vi, p. 131.

> He was besides a man of good sense, good parts, and good nature; but was at the same time as entirely ignorant of the ways of this world as an infant just entered into it could possibly be. As he never had an intention to deceive, so he never suspected such a design in others. He was generous, friendly, and brave to an excess; but simplicity was his characteristic: he did, no more . . . apprehend any such passions as malice and envy to exist in mankind; . . .[23]

Many incidents in the novels attest to the good nature of Fielding's good characters and their natural inclinations to contribute to the happiness of others and to alleviate their sufferings. One of the first scenes in which Adams' compassion is evidenced occurs when the parson, en route to London to sell his sermons, enters the Dragon Inn, where Joseph has been taken after being robbed on the highway and left there to die. Hearing the innkeepers arguing Joseph's fate in their inn, Adams "discovered a great deal of emotion at the distress of this poor creature, whom he observed to be fallen not into the most compassionate hands."[24] Adams is yet unaware that this "poor creature" is Joseph, but that is exactly the point, that he is capable of such indiscriminate sympathy. He is just as indiscriminate in his efforts to relieve the distresses of others, as is witnessed by his rushing to aid a young lady (who later turns out to be Fanny, Joseph's fiancee) in danger of being raped. Though Joseph and Fanny are his parishoners, this has no significance at the time he shows sympathy for their distresses.

---

[23]Joseph Andrews, I, iii, p. 17.

[24]Ibid., I, xiv, p. 50.

Tom's capacity for feeling is comparable to that of Adams. His grief at the prospect of Allworthy's death and the joy he expresses at his uncle's recovery demonstrate the depth of his capacity for feeling; however, his natural sympathy for the distress of others is shown in the incident in which he sells his possessions to aid the Seagrim family. That this compassion is genuine is evidenced in the fact that the items he sells (his pony and a Bible) were cherished gifts to him from his beloved uncle. Tom again shows his compassion when, after an attempted robbery, he gives his assailant money to support his starving family. Fielding describes the incident thus:

> Jones . . . began now to entertain sentiments of compassion for him, . . . and gave him a couple of guineas for the immediate support of his wife and family, adding that he wished he had more for his sake, . . .[25]

Again, the unselfishness of Tom is emphasized by the fact that he gives away what he himself needs for his own survival. These incidents affirm Tom's natural goodness, which is the selfless benevolence of which Fielding approves. Some critics, Murry and Morris Golden in particular, see this natural goodness as accounting for Tom's sexual indiscretions. Pointing out that in each instance it is Tom who is seduced, Murry maintains that Tom perceives generosity in the women's offers of their bodies; therefore, his refusal would condemn him, in his view, as ungrateful.[26] Of course, his interpretation of the

---

[25]Tom Jones, XII, xiv, p. 500.

[26]Murry, "Fielding's 'Sexual Ethic,'" pp. 92-93.

women's motives shows Tom's inability to distinguish genuine generosity from that which is the result of self-interest.

Unfortunately, the exercise of good judgment is not enough to guard the good man against deception. Simplicity is his nature; suspicions of deceit never occur to him. For example, Parson Adams is thoroughly deceived by the squire who promises him numerous favors, including a position as curate in his parish. When the squire's servant keeps returning with excuses as to why his master cannot fulfill his promises, Adams remarks, in all sincerity:

> Was ever anything so unlucky as this poor gentleman? I protest I am more sorry on his account that my own. You see, Joseph, how this good-natured man is treated by his servants: . . . Bless us! how good-nature is used in this world![27]

Ironically, he is absolutely right, but he is unaware that it is his good nature that has been used. When he is finally convinced of the deception, his only comment is on the "wickedness in this Christian world." Still, he cannot conceive of motivation for such behavior.

In a similar manner, Amelia and Booth are constantly deceived by people they consider friends. Colonel James' designs on Amelia are obvious to all except the lady herself and her husband. When she is finally made aware of them by Mrs. Atkinson, she is horrified at the knowledge:

> O Heavens! . . . you chill my blood with horror! the idea freezes me to death; I

---

[27]Joseph Andrews, II, xvi, p. 145.

> cannot, must not, will not think it.[28]

She expressed a similar disbelief in the deception of the Noble Lord and in the immoral acts of others:

> Fie upon it! . . . I hope there are no such people. Indeed, my dear, this is being a little too censorious.[29]

Her disbelief is not in the truthfulness of these discoveries, but in the fact that men are capable of such immorality.

Tom is not as shocked by the deception of Molly when she is unfaithful to him with Square. Yet he is unwilling to believe he has been deceived until he is provided further proof by Molley's sister Betty and her former lover. Of course, had his nature permitted him to be capable of suspicions, he might not have needed this added proof. But that is not the case with the good natured individual.

In each instance of deception, the good are deceived by those who feign goodness by being generous (even Molly's offer of her body is viewed by Tom as a generous action). It is significant that this is the circumstance of the deceptions because of the importance of charity to the good natured. Fielding often expresses the conviction that the person void of a charitable disposition is not a Christian, as true charity, existing as a selfless disinterested benevolence, is the end of morality.[30] Consequently, all his good characters are charitable.

---

[28]Amelia, VIII, ix, p. 96.

[29]Ibid., p. 94.

[30]Battestin, Moral Basis of Fielding's Art, p. 78.

Booth's generosity is illustrated in the scene in which he encounters Bob Bound, an old army officer with whom Booth served in Gibraltor. This gentleman is destitute, his family having not eaten in a week; he asks Booth for a loan of a half crown. Booth has no money, but tells Bound:

> However, you shall not want dinner today; for if you will go home with me, I will lend you a crown with all my heart.[31]

Booth gives Bound twice what had been asked, and Amelia encourages her husband's action, a fact which demonstrates her compassion.

Tom's generosity has been noted earlier, but it is necessary to point out that his generosity derives from what Fielding designates as the proper motive of charity, that is, the sincere desire to relieve the distress of others. When, late in the novel, Mrs. Miller marvels at his generosity, he tells her:

> I hope, madam, . . . there are many who have common humanity; for to relieve such distresses in our fellow-creatures can hardly be called more.[32]

Similarly, this is the attitude of Adams, who is seen offering the only money he has to Joseph to "use as he pleased." In one episode he is saved from giving away his money to a deceiver only because he has lost it.[33] So in tune is he with Tom's sentiments concerning charity that, after being refused

---

[31]Amelia, X, ix, p. 213.

[32]Tom Jones, XIII, vii, p. 528.

[33]Joseph Andrews, III, viii, pp. 214-215.

help by Parson Trulliber, he optimistically sets out to borrow money anywhere in the parish he is visiting, but to no avail:

> Adams . . . knew that he could easily have borrowed such a sum in his own parish, and as he knew he would have lent it himself to any mortal in distress, so he took fresh courage, and sallied out all around the parish; but to no purpose; he returned as pennyless as he went, groaning and lamenting that it was possible, in a country professing Christianity, for a wretch to starve in the midst of his fellow creatures who abounded.[34]

That such an occurrence was possible is one of the many realities that incensed Fielding. He condemns the uncharitable in many of his essays[35] and continues his castigation of the vice in the novels. Joseph Andrews provides many examples of this vice. The conduct of the travellers who refused to help Joseph, and later the unkind behavior of Mrs. Tow-wouse, the hostess of Dragon Inn, are only a few instances. Similar incidents occur in Tom Jones, where the charity of many of the innkeepers depends upon the social position of the person seeking aid.[36] A scene in the first inn at which Tom stops after leaving home illustrates this. The landlord refuses Tom a bed when he learns the circumstances of the young man's journey:

> "Indeed," says the landlord, "I shall use no such civility towards him; for it seems, for all his laced waistcoat there, he is no more a gentleman than myself, . . ."[37]

---

[34]Ibid., II, xv, p. 145.

[35]See for example, Covent Garden essays no. 39 and 44.

[36]See for example, passages in VII, xiii; IX, iii, XIII, iii.

[37]Tom Jones, VII, x, p. 271.

Throughout his career, Fielding was consistent in his attack on certain vices which he saw as injurious to the moral welfare of the society. He also attacked such vices as vanity, affectation, and luxury. Implicit condemnation of these vices is accomplished through ridicule as Fielding sees the conduct resulting from them as ridiculous. Note his treatment of such vain characters as Lady Booby and Mrs. Slipslop; their vanity and affectation are ultimately harmful only to themselves. For example, Lady Booby's lust for Joseph is a problem chiefly because of her vanity and arrogance. The product of a social system which allows her to take advantage of her social inferiors, Lady Booby cannot believe Joseph is capable of not wanting a woman of her position and beauty. When he refuses her, explaining he will not submit his virtue to another's lust, she, in somewhat of a temper, remarks:

> Your virtue! Intolerable confidence! Have you the assurance to pretend, that when a lady demeans herself to throw aside the rules of decency, in order to honour you with the highest favor in her power, your virtue should resist her inclination?[38]

Because chastity is not among Lady Booby's qualities and because she is convinced of her own desirability, she cannot understand Joseph's rejection. Knowledge of Joseph's devotion to Fanny might have given her a more acceptable, though no less painful to her pride, basis for his rejection. But by the time she learns this her lust has incited other emotions which

---

[38]Joseph Andrews, I, vii, p. 32.

cause more problems for her and considerable annoyance for others.

Despite the fact that such behavior is annoying, it is less of a moral threat. On the contrary, Fielding hopes that ridicule of these vices will result in an awareness of their fatuousness and that ultimately they will be discarded. This, however, is not the case with those vices he finds conducive to immorality by virtue of their not being as discernible as vanity and affectation. Hypocrisy, malice, envy, and censoriousness are vices which receive his vehement condemnation. Some of Fielding's immoral characters are guilty of only one of the vices he constantly attacks; but when a character has several of them he or she is among his most contemptible villains.

Trulliber and Thwackum represent the hypocrite filled with avarice and censoriousness, respectively. Trulliber, one of Fielding's most memorable minor characters, is described as a "parson on Sundays, but all the other six might more properly be called a farmer."[39] This is the first clue to Trulliber's insincerity in his professions of religion, as it implies that he is a parson only on Sundays. This inference is confirmed by his reaction to Adams' request for money. After a reminder from Adams of his duty, not only as a clergyman, but a Christian, Trulliber replies:

> I would have thee know, friend . . . I shall not learn my duty from such as thee; I know

---

[39]Ibid., II, xiv, p. 137.

> what charity is, better than to give to vagabonds.[40]

He accuses Adams of not being a clergyman, revealing the suspiciousness of his nature, a quality unappropriate, theoretically, in the clergy. If his uncharitable disposition were not enough to condemn him as immoral, this aspect of his character would do so.

As detestable as Trulliber is, Thwackum, the birch-crazy parson in Tom Jones, is more so. His nature consists of many of the hypocritical vices Fielding warns against; additionally, he embodies Fielding's objection to principles of virtue based on the "terrors of religion." His love of punishment (for Tom) and his religius rhetoric alert the reader to the idea in Fielding's moral system which he represents. Many of his ethical notions are defined in terms of religious ideas and his conduct is a result of his strict adherence to them and his disregard for any others.

Thwackum's hypocrisy is revealed when it is learned that he is romantically interested in Mrs. Blifil, Allworthy's sister. Contrary to his contention that he beats Tom to rid him of a "diabolical spirit," his true motive is that he thinks punishing Tom pleases Mrs. Blifil:

> Now, as both these gentlemen were industrious in taking every opportunity of recommending themselves to the widow, . . . Thwackum had the advantage; for while Square could only scarify the poor lad's reputation he could flay his skin; he considered every lash he gave him a compliment to his mistress.[41]

---

[40]Ibid., p. 141.

[41]Tom Jones, III, vi, p. 105.

However, this form of hypocrisy is not the extent of Thwackum's malevolence; he is also depicted as censorious. Sean Shesgreen claims that the description of censoriousness "throws more light on Thwackum's nature than any other single figure in Fielding's novels."[42] Of the character he calls the "most detestable Character in Society,"[43] Fielding asks:

> Is a readiness to despise, to hate, and condemn, the temper of a Christian, Can he, who passes sentence on the souls of men with more delight and triumph than the devil can execute it, have the impudence to pretend himself a disciple of One who died for the sins of mankind?[44]

The character Fielding is describing is the "saintly censurer," the "holier-than-thou" character.[45] And nowhere is Thwackum's self-righteous attitude more evident than in his final letter to Allworthy:

> Though you cannot want sufficient calls to repentence for the many unwarrantable weaknesses exemplified in your behavior to this wretch, . . . I would yet be wanting to my duty if I spared to give you some admonition in order to bring you to a due sense of your errors . . . and let it serve at least as a warning to you that you may not for the future despise the advice of one who is so indefatigable in his prayers for your welfare.[46]

---

[42]Sean Shesgreen, "The Moral Function of Thwackum, Square and Allworthy," Studies in the Novel 2 (Summer, 1970):165.

[43]"Characters of Men," p. 168.

[44]Ibid.

[45]Miller, Essays on Miscellanies, p. 202.

[46]Tom Jones, XVIII, iv, p. 689.

Many of Thwackum's qualities are reflected in his pupil, Blifil, who is probably the most immoral of all the characters in the novels herein discussed. Flattery, censoriousness, deceit--almost every attribute of the hypocrite--are portions of his nature. Added to these are malice and envy, making him a complete and complex villain.

Blifil's malevolent disposition is only gradually revealed in the novel, the first instance being the incident concerning Sophia's bird:

> One day, . . . Master Blifil, being in the garden with little Sophia and observing the extreme fondness that she showed for her little bird, desired her to trust it for a moment in his hands. Sophia presently complied with the young gentleman's request and, . . . delivered him her bird; of which he was no sooner in possession than he slipped the string from its leg and tossed it into the air.[47]

In explaining why he set the bird free, Blifil shows his ability for shrewd manipulation of the truth. He explains that he thought the bird "languished" for freedom; and since its confinement was unchristian as well as against the "law of Nature," he thought it <u>right</u> to set it free. But then he says that he would never have done so if he had known Sophia would be upset. Blifil is lying, of course, for he <u>is</u> aware of Sophia's fondness for the bird. Moreover, he released the bird before he had time to contemplate its desire for freedom. The incident demonstrates the capacity for sheer malice in one so young, for he is still a child at the time of this incident. The contrast

---

[47]Ibid., IV, iii, p. 120.

of Tom's and Blifil's natures in their youth makes a case for Fielding's belief in an inherent evil unalterable by education or environment. Nothing in his surroundings explains Blifil's evilness, for he is even more malicious and evil than Thwackum, and the influence which might have come from his wicked father and uncle has long since been removed, as they are both dead. Therefore, it is a logical conclusion that his malevolence is his inheritance from his father.

When his other hypocritical qualities begin to surface he is still a young man. Nonetheless, he is exposed as a perfect flatterer:

> Master Blifil . . . had address enough at sixteen to recommend himself at one and the same time to both these opposites (Thwackum and Square). With one he was all religion, with the other he was all virtue. And when both were present he was profoundly silent, which both interpreted in his favour and their own.[48]

Of course, the hypocrisy of his behavior is in the fact that he could not have been supportive of both these men, as they were completely opposite in their principles. To agree with one denies the ability to agree with the other. Yet this is not the extent of Blifil's proficiency in flattery:

> Nor was Blifil contented with flattering both these gentlemen to their faces; he took frequent occasions of praising them both behind their backs to Allworthy, . . . for he knew his uncle repeated all such compliments to the persons for whose use they were meant, . . .[49]

As a censurer, he commits many offenses, mainly against

---

[48]Ibid., III, v, p. 102.

[49]Ibid., pp. 102-103.

Tom. His effectiveness is due primarily to his skill in deception. Malice is the motive for his causing further distress for the Seagrim family, but he attibutes his actions to his love for justice and virtue. Yet, he relates the story of Black George's crime (stealing a hare) with an alteration of many of the significant facts of the incident and a total omission of others, making the crime appear much more serious than it actually was. The result is Allworthy's withdrawal of his financial support to the family.

In terms of plot, the most significant instance of Blifil's censoriousness results in Tom's banishment from Paradise Hall, the Allworthy estate. Reporting Tom's conduct during his uncle's illness, Blifil, as usual, manipulates the facts. Prefacing his story by declaring honorable intentions, he accuses Tom:

> . . . for in the very day of your utmost danger, when myself and all the family were all in tears, he filled the house with riot and debauchery. He drank and sung and roared, and when I gave him a gentle hint of the indecency of his actions, he fell into a violent passion, swore many oaths, called me a rascal, and struck me. . . . I have forgiven him long ago. I wish I could so easily forget his ingratitude to the best benefactor, . . .[50]

In this single speech Blifil shows unparalleled (at least in this novel) adeptness in flattery, deceit and censoriousness. He has uttered only one true statement in his extreme exaggeration of what happened. At this point, the exposure of his character is complete, for a few sentences later, the reasons

---

[50]Ibid., VI, x, p. 229.

for his delay in relating the incident are revealed:

> . . . he resolved to hoard up this business until the indiscretion of Jones should afford some additional complaints; for he thought the joint weight of many facts falling upon him together would be the most likely to crush him.[51]

Together these incidents demonstrate Blifil's malevolence. Of course, he is a villain who will always be one. Even after his treachery is discovered, he decides to confess only after he reasons that there is no way out of his predicament. The last mention of him in the novel finds him still hoarding money and scheming, in hopes of buying a political position, in which, presumably, his treacherous ways will continue.

Blifil's conduct reflects his lack of good nature. His identification with the person whose affections "are solely placed on one single person, whose interest and indulgence alone they consider in every occasion, regarding the good and ill of all others as merely indifferent as far as they contribute to the pleasure or advantage of that person"[52] indicates his inherent egoism. This quality in Blifil is illustrated in the scene in which Allworthy is on his sick-bed. News of Mrs. Blifil's death arrives and there is a debate as to whether Allworthy should be told immediately. The physician attending him violently objects, but Blifil insists:

> . . . Mr. Blifil said he had received such positive and repeated orders from his uncle never to keep any secret from him, for fear of the disquietude it might give him, that

---

[51]Ibid., p. 230.

[52]Ibid., V, vii, p. 186.

> durst not think of disobedience, whatever might be the consequence.[53]

Blifil's decision shows that he is not concerned with his uncle's well-being. It is even safe to say that he was hoping his news might worsen his uncle's condition and gain him an early inheritance; for, as soon as he learns Allworthy will recover, he delivers his news with a "dejected aspect" and a pretense of tears.

It is this type of egoism which indicts Colonel James in Amelia as immoral. James represents the "great" man whose every action is motivated by the prospect of gain for himself. When he aids Booth early in the novel, it is with an aloofness uncharacteristic of the good natured. This is not obvious until much later when a description of the Colonel is offered:

> . . . the colonel, though a very generous man, had not the least grain of tenderness in his disposition. His mind was formed of those firm materials . . . upon which the sorrows of no man living could make an impression. A man of this temper, . . . will fight for the person he calls his friend, and the man that hath but little value for his money will give it him; . . .[54]

Money is of no significance to James and when he helps Booth when the latter is sick while in the army he does so because he considers him a friend. There is no limit to what James will do for a friend, until, Fielding explains, "the favourite passion interposes," at which time his friendship is "sure to subside and vanish into air." Consequently, James abandons

---

[53]Ibid., V, vii, p. 186.

[54]Amelia, VIII, v, pp. 79-80.

Booth because of a "passion" for Miss Matthews, who is in love with Booth; likewise, when he develops an interest in Amelia, he calculates means to make her his mistress without regard for Booth's friendship or the fact that his success would ruin their family.

Fielding was convicted that people perceive others through their own motivations. He has demonstrated this through the incredulity expressed by the good characters at the deceptive quality of others. He again takes up the point through James. The colonel mistakenly assigns to Atkinson his own egoism when he assumes the sergeant will aid him in his endeavors to seduce Amelia in return for a military promotion. As Booth's friendship and Amelia's fidelity are of no real concern to him, he expects the same of Atkinson, who he presumes will not hesitate to do what he himself would do in similar circumstances.

James' type of immorality is again demonstrated in the character of the Noble Lord, another depiction of the corrupt "great" man. Again, the Lord's victims are deceived initially by his pretensions to generosity, which he exercises for eventual sexual gain. Through his accomplice, Mrs. Ellison, who acts as his procuress, he is able to transmit to the husbands of his victims false promises which he never intends to fulfill. The final indictment of his immoral conduct occurs in the last chapter of the novel, where he, now dead, is "become so rotten that he stunk above-ground."[55]

---

[55]Ibid., XII, ix, p. 310.

In another portrait of the great man, a lord to whom Dr. Harrison has petitioned to help Booth gain a preferment, the reasoning by which dishonesty and immorality are justified is shown:

> Do you not know, doctor, that this is as corrupt a nation as ever existed under the sun? And would you think of governing such a people by the strict principles of honesty and morality?[56]

Of course, this great man also refuses to help Booth without the assurance of some profit for himself, which Dr. Harrison refuses to give.

These are but a few instances of the corruptness of the great man in Fielding's fiction. Here it is used to advance one of the major themes of Amelia, which is an attack on the meanness and immorality of the great man.

This chapter has examined the embodiment in his characters of the basic ideas of Fielding's moral construct. The most important element of morality for him was the humanity which is founded on natural, instinctive sympathy and, consequently, charity towards others. This is the prime characteristic of all his models of virtue. Adams is as selfless as any man in his position can be and then some; Tom's actions all stem from a natural goodness which after he has learned good judgment become the mark of the moral man. And despite their financial difficulties, Amelia and Will Booth also exhibit this same virtue.

---

[56]Ibid., XI, ii, p. 228.

On the other hand, immorality is the product of hypocrisy and the self-interest which disregards the concerns of others. Such vices when present in any degree in an individual occasion conduct which generates the moral decay of the society, a point most profoundly illustrated in Amelia. Dramatization of these basic principles was achieved in all Fielding's novels. He uses various novelistic devices to achieve that goal, two of which will be examined in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

MORAL PRINCIPLES CONVEYED THROUGH PLOT AND IRONY IN FIELDING'S NOVELS

The principal ideas of Fielding's moral system are exemplified most clearly through the characters who people his novels. However, plot and authorial intrusion play significant roles in Fielding's effort to convey his concepts of morality through fiction. While characterization is used to embody in "living" models those abstract ideas which constitute for Fielding the necessary qualities of the moral individual, plot and irony are devices through which he dramatizes and emphasizes those same ideas. Through construction of incidents, he presents his principles of morality in action; through ironic authorial intrusion on those he enables the reader to confirm his own judgment on the action presented.

Fielding sometimes uses these devices in a complementary manner. In other words, he constructs a situation to present a particular idea and follows that presentation with his own comment on the action. His comment usually conveys the motive of the character and his own judgment concerning what has occurred. For example, the incident in Tom Jones in which Square is found in Molly Seagrim's bedroom is clearly intended to expose the discrepancies between the moral theory and the practice of the philosopher. Fielding comments on Square's exposure in an ironic tone which reveals his judgment of Square's behavior and his character:

> I question not but the surprise of the reader will be here equal to that of Jones, as the suspicions which arise from the appearance of this wise and grave man in such a place may seem so inconsistent with that character. . . . But to confess the truth, . . . philosophers are composed of flesh and blood as well as other human creatures, and however sublimated and refined the theory of these may be, a little practical frailty is as incident to them as to other mortals. It is, indeed, in theory only and not in practice, . . . that consists the difference; . . . the practice would be vexatious and troublesome, and therefore the same wisdom which teaches them to know this teaches them to avoid carrying it into execution.[1]

It is also in this manner that motive for a character's action is revealed. It is motive which is the criterion for judging the morality or immorality of an action. Ronald Paulson explains that Fielding's primary interest, as a satirist, is in actions; but because actions (and words) can be misleading, motive becomes the only true standard of judgment.[2] Once a motive is revealed, judgment of the morality of the action is possible. Fielding's own comments serve either to confirm or correct the reader's judgment. In the incident cited above, the motive of lust is revealed a few paragraphs later:

> . . . he liked the girl better for the want of chastity which, if she had possessed it, must have been a bar to his pleasures; he pursued and obtained her.[3]

---

[1] Tom Jones, V, v, pp. 171-172.

[2] Ronald Paulson, ed. Fielding: Critical Essays, p. 9.

[3] Tom Jones, V, v, pp. 171.

Several incidents in the novels are constructed for the sole purpose of presenting a moral point. This is true especially in Joseph Andrews. The episodic structure of that novel is such that it allows Fielding to insert a dramatization of any idea he chooses. One such incident occurs when Adams, momentarily lost from Joseph, encounters a patriot who engages him in a discourse on courage. The patriot believes that a man not willing to die for his country is not worthy to live in it, and therefore should be shot or hanged; he expresses an abhorrence for any type of cowardice. Then, at the first opportunity (a chance to rescue a young woman in danger of rape) to act courageously himself, the patriot flees homeward "without once looking behind him." The man acts immorally by virtue of Fielding's definition of the moral man, who is courageous and always willing to help those in distress. This is only one of several incidents, irrelevant to plot, constructed primarily to make a moral point. Fielding undoubtedly felt justified in using this technique as he not only interrupts plot to moralize, but for this purpose he also incorporated entire stories which sometimes span chapters.[4]

The insertion of incidents constructed for moral instruction is a technique of secondary importance in Tom Jones. Ironic

---

[4]These "imterpolated" stories are "The History of Lenora" in Book II, the history of Mr. Wilson in Book III, and "The History of Two Friends" in Book IV of Joseph Andrews. I.B. Cauthen's study, "The Digressions in Joseph Andrews," College English 17 (April, 1956):379-382, points out that these digressions are not traditional digressions but are "more akin to the exemplum" and therefore closely related to the aesthetic of the novel. See p. 382.

comment is the chief means by which Fielding's true moral judgment is shown in this novel. Much has been written on the use of irony in Tom Jones.[5] William Empson's study points out that Fielding employs double irony to convey his attitudes towards Tom's indiscretions.[6] Double irony is the presentation of opposing views which the ironist pretends to be sympathetic to while rejecting both or holding a balanced position between the two.[7] Fielding's reflection on the Upton Inn incident in which Sophia leaves after having caught Tom and Mrs. Waters in bed together illustrates the use of double irony. Fielding's refusal to take a stand on the action is a form of self-deprecating irony which forces the reader to make the final judgment.[8] Eleanor Hutchens has studied Fielding's use of verbal irony and his ironic treatment of the word "prudence."[9] Verbal irony, as described by Hutchens, is "making the literal meaning (of a word) fit the context while the connotative significance clashes with it."[10] In an argument which is supportive of Hutchens' work, Glenn Hatfield maintains that the extensive use of verbal irony in Fielding's work reflects a sensitivity to the corrup-

---

[5]See also John Preston, "Plot as Irony: The Reader's Role in Tom Jones," Journal of English Literary History 35 (December 1968):365-380.

[6]"Tom Jones" in Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays.

[7]Ibid., p. 124.

[8]Ibid., pp. 125-126.

[9]"Verbal Irony in Tom Jones," Publications of the Modern Language Association 77 (March 1962):46.

[10]Eleanor Hutchens, Irony in Tom Jones (University, Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 1967), p. 9.

tion of language which was prevalent during the Augustan Age.[11] Moreover, Hatfield sees Fielding's exposure of the corruption of words as related to his exposure of the corruption of morals.[12]

This chapter is concerned with Fielding's use of incidents and irony to convey his basic moral beliefs. To this end, it will entail an examination of incidents, relevant and irrelevant to plot, which reveal these beliefs. Also, Fielding's irony will be examined to determine the judgments which he made on these incidents.

One of the first incidents in Joseph Andrews which provides a point of moral significance occurs when Joseph is robbed shortly after leaving London. His attackers beat him, strip him naked and leave him to die in a ditch, where he lay groaning for help when a coach comes along. As the passengers debate whether or not to help the injured Joseph, their selfishness and ridiculous vanities are revealed. The reasons for refusing Joseph vary from his being naked to his having no money to pay his fare. Finally, Joseph is taken in at the insistence of a lawyer who fears they might be charged with murder if Joseph dies as a result of their refusal. At this point, Joseph's modesty will not allow him to enter the coach naked, and he requests the loan of a coat. A series of new arguments follows until a postilion lends Joseph his coat, protesting, "That he would rather ride

---

[11]Henry Fielding and the Language of Irony (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968), p. 3.

[12]Ibid.

in his shirt all his life than suffer a fellow-creature to lie in so miserable a condition."[13]

The behavior of the travellers reflects an unkind and hypocritical disposition antithetical to the disposition of the moral individual. It is clear that this episode was incorporated to show Fielding's disapproval of this type of behavior; it is not instrumental to the plot but it initiates a series of events which provide further comment on charity. One such comment occurs when the different attitudes of Betty, the chambermaid, and Mrs. Tow-wouse, the hostess at Dragon Inn, are shown. Betty, who turns out to be more than a little promiscuous, readily aids the injured Joseph when he is brought to the inn; she even secures clothing for him from one of her lovers. By contrast, Mrs. Tow-wouse is stoutly opposed to providing any services to Joseph:

> "Common charity, a f__t!" says she, "common charity teaches us to provide for ourselves, and our families; and I and mine won't be ruined by your charity, . . ."[14]

The hostess is adamant in her refusals--until she is led to believe that Joseph is a gentleman:

> This somewhat abated the severity of Mrs. Tow-wouses's countenance. She said, "God forbid she should not discharge the duty of a Christian, since the poor gentleman was brought to her house. She had a natural antipathy to vagabonds; but could pity the misfortunes of a Christian as soon as another. . . . God forbid he should want anything in my house."[15]

---

[13]Joseph Andrews, I, vi, p. 44.

[14]Ibid., p. 46.

[15]Ibid., xv, pp. 54-55.

Fielding intends to emphasize the absolute hypocrisy and self-interest of Mrs. Tow-wouse in contrast to the good-natured kindness of Betty, who, despite her sexual looseness, is more moral than her mistress.

Though not every encounter of Joseph and Adams occasions a comment on charity, another incident which does is significant because it explicitly condemns the uncharitable disposition. By the time of this incident, Adams and Joseph have been joined by Fanny and the three of them are low on money. To pay a debt incurred at a local inn, Adams calls on a fellow clergyman, Parson Trulliber, for a loan. Trulliber turns out to be the most parsimonious of all the characters the trio encounter on their journey. Notwithstanding his wealth (he claims to have enough money to "buy" both the vicar and rector of the neighboring parish) and his religion, Trulliber refuses to help Adams, who condemns him as unchristian:

> "Now, there is no command more express, no duty more frequently enjoined, than charity. Whoever, therefore, is void of charity, I make no scruple in pronouncing that he is no Christian."[16]

This direct condemnation, which, until now, was absent, necessarily includes all those characters guilty of this vice. Appearing when it does, it gives a sense that Fielding wishes to show that the vice is present in people of various social positions and even among those who profess Christian beliefs.

Fielding presents similar instances of this lack of kindness in Tom Jones. At many of the inns Tom visits, he is

---

[16]Ibid., II, xiv, p. 142.

treated harshly until the innkeepers are somehow led to believe he is a gentleman. At Upton Inn he is attacked by both the landlord and his wife, allegedly for bringing a "whore" (Mrs. Waters) to their establishment, which is described as an inn of "good repute." For, as the narrator explains, the landlady, "very strictly adhered" to a belief that ". . . to exclude all vulgar concubinage, and to drive all whores in rags from within the walls, is within the power of everyone."[17] It is soon learned that the aversion to Tom and his companion is generated by the way the latter is dressed, for when the innkeepers learn that Tom and Mrs. Waters are supposedly people of "fashion," they (the innkeepers) are not concerned with what Tom and Mrs. Waters plan to do together. To the contrary, the landlady becomes profuse in expressions of sympathy and charity. She and her husband even defend Mrs. Waters against the gossip of a sergeant who is acquainted with her past:

> "All a parcel of scandalous stuff," answered the mistress of the house. "I am sure, now she is dressed, she looks like a very good sort of lady, and she behaves herself like one, for she gave me a guinea for the use of my clothes."[18]

The change in the attitudes and actions of these innkeepers is prompted by their knowledge of the social positions of their guests. While they were prepared to offer no kindness to anyone whom they considered a "ragged whore," they will not refuse

---

[17] Tom Jones, VIII, iii, p. 365.

[18] Ibid., vi, p. 376.

a "fashionable" whore who is capable of making their kindness profitable.

Episodes are also used to convey Fielding's objection to the belief that reason should control or dominate emotions. He saw reason as significant only in prompting good judgment. His rejection of the theoretical dominance of reason is shown by the following incidents, which prove the disparity between empty theorizing and the ability of the individual to actually practice what the theory demands. While Tom is recuperating from a broken arm, Square lectures him on the moral contemptibleness of expressing pain:

> He said it was a mere abuse of words to call things evil in which there was no moral unfitness; that pain, . . . was the most contemptible thing in the world; . . . In pronouncing these, he was one day so eager that he unfortunately bit his tongue, and in such a manner that it not only put an end to his discourse, but created much emotion in him; and caused him to mutter an oath or two; . . .[19]

Fielding also uses Adams' long discourse on submission to the Will of Providence to set the stage for the rejection of empty theorizing. Adams is stressing to Joseph the importance of moderation in expressing emotion and of submission to Providence:

> "Now believe me, no Christian ought so set his heart on any person or thing in this world, but that, whenever it shall be required or taken from him in any manner by Divine Providence, he may be able, peaceably, quietly and contentedly, to resign it.[20]

---

[19]Ibid., V, iii, p. 161.

[20]Joseph Andrews, IV, vii, p. 265.

Just as he finishes the last words, he is informed that his son has drowned. Hearing this news, the parson:

> . . . stood silent a moment, and soon began to stamp about the room and deplore his loss with the bitterest agony.[21]

While in this state, he learns that he has been misinformed and that his son has not drowned; he is then as "extravagant" in his happiness as he had been in his grief.

A scene identical to these appears in Amelia. While Booth is in prison he meets a philsopher who lectures him on the ultimate insignificance of the "blessings and evils" of life, the former of which he claims no elation in possessing, the latter no dejection in suffering, as all blessings and distresses are "merely imaginary." As the philosopher is concluding his speech, the baliff enters prepared to transport him to prison. This twist in events allows Fielding to expose the philosopher as a hypocrite:

> The poor man seemed very shocked at this news. . . . "I intreat you," said the prisoner, "give me another day. I shall take it as a great obligation; and you will disappoint me in the cruellest manner in the world if you refuse me. . . . [But] it would be the most barbarous disappointment, . . . and will make me the most miserable man alive.[22]

Despite this character's professed belief in the Stoic attitude, he is ultimately incapable of converting his theory into practice. For Fielding, spontaneous emotional expression is char-

---

[21]Ibid.

[22]Amelia, VIII, x, pp. 101-102.

acteristic of the moral individual; this expression is necessarily void of rationalistic theory. Any professions to the contrary are hypocritical. Adams' theorizing is ridiculed as affectation; Square and the philosopher in Amelia have moral principles which make them immoral, and Fielding rejects their positions as impractical and absurd as well.

Fielding's belief that the inherent nature of the individual is virtually unalterable has been discussed previously. In illustrating this belief, Fielding allows Joseph and Adams to debate the issue of public versus private education. Adams believes that it is private education which corrupts the morals of the individual. Joseph, on the other hand, believes that education has no effect on morality:

> . . . witness several country gentlemen, who were educated within five miles of their own houses, and are as wicked as if they had known the world from their infancy. I remember when I was in the stable, if a young horse was vicious in his nature, no correction would make him otherwise; I take it to be equally the same among men: if a boy be of a mischievous, wicked inclination, no school, . . . will ever make him good, on the contrary, if he be of a righteous temper, you may trust him to London, or wherever else you please--he will be in no danger of being corrupted."[23]

As proof of this point, the education of an immoral squire whom Adams has met is described:

> This gentleman, . . . had been educated (if we may use that expression) in the country, and at his own home, under the care of his mother,

---

[23] Joseph Andrews, III, v, p. 195.

> and a tutor who had orders never to correct him, nor to compel him to learn more than he liked, . . . and his tutor, . . . became his companion, . . . over a bottle, which the young squire had a very early relish for.[24]

The squire also toured Europe as a part of his education and returned home "with a hearty contempt for his own country" to become a member of Parliament. But the narrator goes on to point out:

> . . . but what distinguished him chiefly was a strange delight which he took in everything which is ridiculous, odious, and absurd in his own species.[25]

Each detail of the description and the subsequent actions of the squire (his cruel treatment of Adams and his lascivious pursuit of Fanny) are meant to show that his inherent evil was not altered by a private education.

The same idea is examined in Tom Jones through the treatment of Blifil and Tom. In this case, the point Fielding wishes to make is more fully supported by the particulars surrounding the education of these young men. Whereas the example in Joseph Andrews presented individuals of different backgrounds (Joseph and the squire), Tom Jones provides two individuals with identical backgrounds who were raised in the same environment. Their education was planned to ensure the avoidance of moral corruption:

---

[24]Ibid., vii, p. 206.

[25]Ibid.

> Mr. Allworthy himself, . . . had resolved to educate his nephew as well as the other lad, whom he had in a manner adopted, in his own house, where he thought their morals would escape all that danger of being corrupted to which they would unavoidably be exposed in any public school or university.[26]

Yet the private education of Tom and Blifil is not morally sound. Allworthy finds errors in the moral positions of their tutors, Thwackum and Square:

> These apparent errors in the doctrine of Thwackum served greatly to palliate the contrary errors in that of Square, which our good man saw and no less condemned. He thought, indeed, that the different exuberancies of these gentlemen would correct their different imperfections, and that from both, especially with his assistance, the two lads would derive sufficient precepts of true religion and virtue.[27]

Of course, the plan of Allworthy is erroneous. Nevertheless, Fielding's point is that Tom's goodness is as unaffected by the immorality of Thwackum and Square as is Blifil's evil by the goodness of Tom and Allworthy. Indeed, Blifil's evil nature is nurtured by the weak morality of his tutors. He shows a "decent reverence" for their doctrines and principles and ascribes many of his religious or virtuous sentiments to the instruction he had received from one of the other of the men. He is able to use some aspect of their doctrines to justify almost every cruel and devious thing he does.

---

[26] Tom Jones, III, vi, p. 103.

[27] Ibid., pp. 103-104.

Through his revelation of Tom's and Blifil's moral natures, Fielding is also able to support his contention that vice is often nurtured rather than altered. When Blifil resolves to deceive all those involved in the arrangement of his marriage to Sophia, his method of deception is attributed to the teaching of Thwackum and Square:

> . . . he had availed himself of the piety of Thwackum, who held that if the end proposed was religious (as surely matrimony is), it mattered not how wicked were the means. . . . he used to apply the philosophy of Square, which taught that the end was immaterial so that the means were fair and consistent with moral rectitude.[28]

So, when Blifil is questioned by Allworthy concerning Sophia's affections, he answers:

> ". . . I promise you I would not myself for any consideration, . . . consent to marry this young lady if I were not persuaded she had all the passion for me which I desire she should have.[29]

Blifil's answer is both true and false. The interpretation he intends Allworthy to derive from it is false, yet the answer itself is true as Blifil is totally unconcerned that Sophia does not love him. Thus his method of "conveying a lie to his uncle without the guilt of telling one"[30] is a twisted distortion of the doctrines of his instructors, and shows how he was encouraged to evil actions by them.

---

[28]Ibid., VII, vi, p. 257.

[29]Ibid., p. 258.

[30]Ibid., p. 257.

Another of the principal points of Fielding's moral system which is revealed in the novels is his belief that hypocrisy and deceit always claim the good man as victim. Each of the novels provides incidents which dramatize this belief.[31] In Amelia, Booth is often deceived by the hypocritical "great man" who makes promises he never fulfills. One of the more memorable incidents in which this occurs shows Booth giving money to a man who pretends to be able to secure a preferment for him. The man is described as a gentleman who:

> . . . pretended to be a man of great interest and consequence; by which means he did not only receive great respect and court from the inferior officers, but actually bubbled several of their money, by undertaking to do them services which in reality, were not within his power.[32]

With assurance from this gentleman of a commission, Booth gives him the fifty pounds Amelia has raised to help him pay a gambling debt. Unknown to Booth, the money was raised by Amelia's pawning some of the belongings of herself and her children. Though assured that he will hear from the "great man" as soon as a commission is available, Booth never does.

Fielding believed that hypocrisy and deceit were the main characteristics of the great man and that, whenever possible, this character was likely to contribute to the moral corruption of the society. Again, it is Amelia which best exempli-

---

[31]Incidents of this type in Joseph Andrews and Tom Jones have been previously cited. See Chapter III.

[32]Amelia, XI, iv, p. 242.

fies this belief. In an effort to aid the Booths, Dr. Harrison goes to a nobleman to seek aid in getting a preferment for Booth. In return for his help, the nobleman requires that Dr. Harrison support his candidate for mayor. Harrison refuses because the candidate is unqualified; he feels that to support such a man is to advance corruption. The nobleman informs Harrison that merit has little to do with gaining position:

> "The conduct of politicians is not formed upon the principles of religion. . . . And do you really think, doctor, . . . that any minister could support himself in this country upon such principles as you recommend? Do you think he would be able to baffle an opposition unless he should oblige his friends by conferring places often contrary to his own inclinations and his own opinion?[33]

Harrison answers that he does think so, and goes on to assert that honest and moral practices are the only means of correcting a corrupt society. Then, appealing to the nobleman's sense of morality, Harrison again asks him to help Booth, to which the "great man" promises, "with a leering countenance" to do everything in his power.

Many of the incidents just cited do not affect the outcome of the plot in any of the novels. Because of this it is probable that Fielding intended that they simply serve as evidence to support his moral beliefs. Irony was used with the same intent.

There is limited use of ironic comment in Amelia. The comments Fielding makes on characters and motives in this novel

---

[33]Ibid., ii, pp. 229-230.

are often direct. In Joseph Andrews there is ironic comment, but it is used chiefly for comic effect rather than to make a moral judgment. In Tom Jones, however, Fielding depends on the use of irony to advance his moral ideas almost as much as he depends on plot and characterization.

This portion of the chapter will examine the use of authorial intrusion, primarily ironic comment, as a method of revealing Fielding's moral principles. It is necessary to note here that Fielding's use of irony in his fiction is not a point of distinction between him and other Augustan writers. Paulson explains that the adoption of the "ironic pose" was a convention of Augustan decorum.[34] When applied to experience, the ironic pose serves to gain the reader's confidence in the narrator's judgment; applied to character, it creates a kind of psychological truth.[35] Whether from the character himself or from the narrator, the irony is a device to aid in the discernment of morality or immorality.

One of the functions of irony is to show the discrepancy between words and actions, such as is clear from the following comment on Parson Trulliber:

> And indeed, he had not only a very good character as to other qualities in the neighborhood, but was a reputed man of great charity: for though he never gave a farthing, he had always that word in his mouth.[36]

This statement reveals a discrepancy which the reader has already seen in Trulliber's treatment of Adams, but the irony is height-

---

[34]Paulson, Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays, p. 6.

[35]Ibid.

[36]Joseph Andrews, II, xv, p. 143.

ened by the single phrase, "that word in his mouth." This phrase reveals much about Trulliber's character and Fielding's attitude towards him. The reader is actually ignorant as to whether "that word" is "charity" or "farthing," but the choice is insignificant, because it has been shown that charity for Trulliber exists in words only; likewise, his greed has also been shown, so that it is plausible that "farthing" could be the word "always in his mouth." Even the use of "in his mouth" rather than "on his lips" points to Trulliber's greed. Through the use of a single phrase, Fielding accuses the parson of parsimony and avarice. A similar use of verbal irony is employed to condemn the avarice of Peter Pounce:

> Peter . . . used to advance the servants their wages; . . . at the moderate premium of fifty percent, or a little more; by which charitable methods, . . . the honest man had, from nothing, in a few years amassed a small sum of twenty thousand pounds or thereabouts.[37]

Of course, Peter is robbing the servants and Fielding uses irony to express his indignation at his actions. All of the key words in the passage are positioned so that the reader is quickly aware that Fielding means the opposite of what he says. The words or phrases "moderate," "charitable methods," "honest man," and "small sum" are literally false in the context in which they are used. Fielding's use of "moderate" to describe Pounce's exorbitant interest rates produces sarcastic clash of the literal meaning of the terms with that which it describes. Likewise,

---

[37]Ibid., I, x, p. 38.

the use of "charitable methods," "honest man," and "small sum" as descriptive terms clash with the actual usuriousness and crookedness by which Pounce has accumulated a fortune.

In Tom Jones, the use of irony is often more subtle and complex. One comment on charity illustrates the use of double irony. Immediately after Tom has offered to aid Mrs. Miller's relatives, Nightingale, who is unaware of Tom's generosity, offers to give the family a guinea "with all my heart." Intruding on the narrative, Fielding maintains that Nightingale had no obligation to follow Tom's example, since "there are thousands who would not have contributed a single halfpenny . . ."[38] Clearly Nightingale is not charitable. At this point, however, Fielding offers, almost as an explanation for Nightingale's action, two opposing opinions on charity which he claims an inability to reconcile:

> One party seems to hold that all acts of this kind are to be esteemed as voluntary gifts, and however little you give (if indeed no more than your good wishes), you acquire a great degree of merit in so doing. Others, on the contrary, appear to be as firmly persuaded that beneficience is a positive duty, and that whenever the rich fall greatly short of their ability in relieving the distresses of the poor, their pitiful largesses are so far from being meritorious that they have only performed their duty by halves and are in some sense more contemptible than those who have entirely neglected it. . . . I shall only add that the givers are generally of the former sentiments and the receivers are almost universally inclined to the latter.[39]

---

[38]Tom Jones, XIII, vii, p. 528.

[39]Ibid., pp. 528-529.

The final statement of this passage indicates the selfishness of each opinion. Fielding rejects both positions, implying that the correct moral position is between the two. Indeed, Fielding often expressed the obligation of the rich to do all within their power to relieve the distress of the poor; there is no option in the fulfillment of this duty. Yet by the same token, the recipients of charity are required to accept uncomplainingly the generosity of others.

To express his belief in the importance of prudence for the moral individual, Fielding makes extensive use of verbal irony. Eleanor Hutchens's study on the ironic uses of "prudence" in Tom Jones shows that Fielding often distorted the favorable connotations of the word to either ridicule or condemn unadmirable characters.[40] For Fielding, the positive manifestations of prudence are the ability to judge situations or individuals wisely, the exercise of sufficient caution in dealing with others, and the reflection, in outward appearance, of the inner goodness of an individual. However, the uses of the word "prudence" are not always associated with these meanings. When it is used negatively in connection with immoral characters, it takes on the meaning of cautious cunning or shrewdness. Indeed, Blifil is often described as a "prudent" young man; his prudence, however, amounts to shrewdness and miserliness. One of the rhetorical uses of irony notes the type of prudence which Blifil possesses:

---

[40]"'Prudence' in Tom Jones," Philological Quarterly 39 (October 1960):499-501.

> Prudence and circumspection are necessary even to the best of men. They are, indeed, as it were, a guard to Virtue, without which she can never be safe. . . .

Up to this point, Fielding is completely serious in his recommendation of the quality of prudence, but in the next line he begins to play with words and meanings:

> It is not enough that your designs, nay, that your actions, are intrinsically good; you must take care that they shall appear so. If your inside be never so beautiful, you must preserve a fair outside also. . . .

At this point, the comment begins to take on a double meaning. Fielding is recommending prudence while at the same time warning that deceit and cunning can masquerade as prudence. The use of "designs" seems almost a slip of the tongue, suggesting such deceit. He goes on to add:

> Let this, . . . be your constant maxim: that no man can be good enough to neglect the rules of prudence, nor will Virtue herself look beautiful unless she be bedecked with the outward ornaments of decency and decorum. . . . It is in reality for my own sake that, while I am discovering the rocks on which innocence and goodness split, I may not be misunderstood to recommend the very means to my worthy readers by which I intend to show them they will be undone.[41]

The final statement is a reiteration of the fact that deceit and cunning may also wear the "outward ornaments of decency and decorum." Two chapters later, the "prudent" Blifil is purchasing Tom's Bible and making sure he is seen reading it often ("much oftener than he had before been in his own") and eventually being "forced" to admit why he had Tom's book. Of course, this

---

[41] Tom Jones, III, vii, p. 108.

is another instance of Blifil's manipulative deception, but it proves that cunning can wear the guise of prudence.

Irony is also used to convey the motive behind a character's behavior. In Joseph Andrews, this device is used to explain Mrs. Slipslop's snubbing Fanny when they meet at an inn. The explanation begins as a discussion of the supposed differences between the gentility and the lower classes, and continues to explain that the manners of the genteel are absurdly imitated by the "upper" servants who, thinking themselves superior to the other servants, treat those servants as they themselves are treated by their masters:

> This distinction I have never met with anyone able to account for; it is sufficient that, so far from looking on each other as brethren in the Christian language, they seem scarce to regard each other as of the same species. This, the terms "strange persons, people one does not know, the creature, wretches, beasts, brutes," and many other appellations evidently demonstrate; which Mrs. Slipslop, having often heard her mistress use, thought she had also a right to use in her turn; . . .[42]

This explanation, Fielding says, accounts for the "great character" of Slipslop, which those who do not know "high" people might think absurd. Then, as an afterthought, he continues:

> . . . perhaps, if the gods, according to the opinion of some, made men only to laugh at them, there is no part of our behaviour which answers the end of our creation better than this.[43]

This is an example of what A. R. Humphreys calls the "frankly

---

[42]Joseph Andrews, II, xii, pp. 132-133.

[43]Ibid., p. 133.

prepared bathos."[44] The entire passage up to this point has a tone of earnestness of purpose. The final statement drops this tone and reveals Fielding's true indignation.

Irony also works to reveal motive in the comment which shows Thwackum's religious justification of his romantic pursuit of Mrs. Blifil:

> Thwackum was encouraged to the undertaking by reflecting that to court your neighbor's sister is nowhere forbidden; . . . As some instances of women, therefore, are mentioned in the divine law which forbids us to covet our neighbor's goods, and that of a sister omitted, he concluded it to be lawful.[45]

Fielding's use of "covet" suggests that Thwackum's intent was not entirely moral, and probably not religious. The use of religious terminology forces the contrast between the parson's immoral motives and his sanctified professions.

Finally, authorial comment is used to show Fielding's total rejection of the moral doctrines of Thwackum and Square. Explaining their attitudes on mercy, Fielding observes:

> The two gentlemen did indeed somewhat differ in opinions concerning the objects of this sublime virtue, by which Thwackum would probably have destroyed one half of mankind and Square the other half.[46]

This compact statement suggests the inhumanity of the person who could conceive of moral principles which would condemn half of mankind and which, in effect, leave no room for mercy. Fielding obviously intended to show that such inhumanity is

---

[44]"Fielding's Irony: Its Methods and Effects" In Critical Essays, p. 17.

[45]Tom Jones, III, v, p. 105.

[46]Ibid., x, p. 112.

the essence of immorality.

Irony and plot are employed in various ways by Fielding to advance his moral system in his fiction. The novels provide countless examples of the uses of them to expound his basic principles as well as to explore the broader scope of his moral attitudes. This chapter has given various illustrations of how these devices are used to dramatize and affirm those principles which are the bases of his moral judgment.

The manipulation of plot and narrative and the variations in the type of irony contribute to the structure and style of the novels; but the significance of their use is ultimately in the contribution they make to the final goal of the novels--which is the moral edification of the reader.

CONCLUSION

The novels of Henry Fielding consciously and purposely illustrate his principles of morality. Writing during a period when individual and social morality were of great concern, Fielding made moral instruction a purpose in his work. Modern critics have come to recognize and acknowledge those basic moral principles which are the foundation of plot and characterization in Fielding's novels. The understanding of these principles has enabled them to remove the label of "immoral" which has for so long plagued both Fielding and his fiction.

Examination of the precepts of some ancient Greek and Roman philosophers as well as of the ideas of some philosophers and theologians of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries identifies possible influences on Fielding's moral concepts. The Ancients taught the possibility of social perfection, with emphasis on the moral responsibility of the individual to contribute towards the attainment of that perfection.

The striving to attain this goal produced opposing views on the capability of mankind to achieve the moral perfection necessary to sustain the perfect society. One view held that man is naturally evil and that all his actions stem from self-interest. The other view held that, to the contrary, man's natural inclination is towards goodness and that his chief happiness could be attained through promoting the happiness of others. The latter view, expressed by John Locke and his followers, eventually supplanted the former view, which is that of

Thomas Hobbes. Locke also advanced the belief in the moral educability of man. Believing that concepts of morality and religion are acquired through experience and reason, he was convinced that through reason man could arrive at moral and religious truths, and that mankind could be improved by the improvement of the individual experience. The influence of Locke's ideas spread throughout the eighteenth century and might be viewed as the seed which produced the "benevolist" tradition of which Lord Shaftesbury and the Latitudinarians were the chief proponents.

Lord Shaftesbury is associated with the "benevolist" tradition chiefly because of his emphasis on the emotions rather than the reason of the individual. He believed morality was based on feelings and trusted it to an inherent "moral sense" which, without reasoning, was capable of assessing the good or evil of an action. In this sense, for Shaftesbury even religion was unnecessary for the achievement of morality. It is here that Shaftesbury's philosophy deviates from that of the Latitudinarians divines by whom he was influenced.

The Latitudinarians also held that the emotions, or the passions, were the basis of morality. As man's natural inclination is towards goodness, they were convicted that cultivation of the benevolent passions would result in moral perfection. Unlike Shaftesbury; however, the Latitudinarians saw religion as a necessary element in that cultivating process. Through religion, they believed, man could be shown the importance of promoting the good of the whole and thereby encouraged to express his benevolent passions through acts of charity; for

it is good works, according to Latitudinarian doctrine, that are essential to salvation. More than faith or religious dogma, good deeds were considered the ultimate evidence of morality. The performance of such deeds is the result of a disposition which seeks to promote the well-being of others, a disposition which came to be called "good nature."

It is perhaps impossible to assign any of these philosophies or doctrines as the prime influence on the moral beliefs of Henry Fielding. This study concludes that Fielding was influenced, to one extent or another, by all of these ideas; the moral principles set forth in his essays and poetry support this conclusion. Fielding's moral construct exists as a dichotomy of "positives" and "negatives." His overall view of mankind was in accord with classic beliefs--that is, he trusted in man's potential for moral perfection. Yet at the same time, he acknowledged the existence of evil and accounted for it in his own moral system by including those vices which he felt were the basis of evil and immorality.

Good nature and charity are the main positive elements of Fielding's moral philosophy. For him, the individual who possesses these qualities is moral. Good nature as a virtue is comprised essentially of benevolent emotions which are expressed through active compassion and charity. The good natured man constantly seeks to aid others in any way he can, and does so simply for the self-satisfaction he receives in helping others. Such a disposition is the ultimate expression of humanity.

Though the qualities of good nature and benevolence ensure a basic morality, these alone are not sufficient to produce

the completely moral individual. For such an individual, religion and good judgment, or prudence, are also necessary. Religion acts as a complementary force to good nature, providing a foundation for moral solidity. Prudence, too, is a necessary complement to good nature as it enables the good individual to protect himself from deception and ill-use.

Fielding believed it extremely important that the good natured man be protected from the deceit and ill-treatment of the evil individual. His acknowledgment of the inherent malignity of some individuals prompted him to provide, for the moral man, instruction in the discernment of the "negative" qualities of the evil individual. Hypocrisy and vanity are the main vices which Fielding warns against in his essays and novels. These, he thought, were the vices most destructive to the moral fabric of society. Vanity, which is rooted in self-interest, is antithetical to charity; hypocrisy is vanity in its most extreme and dangerous form. As they are both the result of "evil passions" they produce evil actions and become the prime instruments in promoting immorality.

The intent of each of Fielding's novels is to promote morality and undermine immorality. This study examines Fielding's use of three devices, characterization, plot, and authorial intrusion, to present his basic moral beliefs in his fiction.

The examination of appropriate characters showed that Fielding usually used contrasting pairs to embody constrasting moral ideas. Parson Adams is in total contrast to Parson Trulliber. Adams is the exemplar of goodness; he is sincere in his religion and possesses every admirable quality of the moral man

despite a few vanities and idiosyncracies at which Fielding pokes fun. Trulliber, on the other hand, is everything Adams is not. He is a religious hypocrite who is mean and greedy. His vanity and pride are enormous in comparison to Adams' frailties.

Similarly, Tom Jones and Blifil are opposing characters. Tom embodies the idea of the necessity of prudence as a complement to good nature while Blifil embodies the idea that vice is often disguised as virtue, in this case, the very virtue Tom needs to acquire. The characters of Tom and Blifil additionally concretize Fielding's idea of the original distinction in the natures of some individuals with identical circumstances of birth, environment, and education.

Will Booth is the moral man in need of religious foundation. He stands in contrast to James, who is egoistic, immoral, and atheistic. Booth illustrates Fielding's belief that the moral man who lacks religious foundation is in danger of serious moral lapses.

The examination of the use of plot showed that Fielding often employed what amounts to plot manipulation to make moral statements. In all of the novels there are instances of interpolated stories, but in Amelia and Joseph Andrews the narrative is interrupted to incorporate an incident through which a moral point is made. In Tom Jones Fielding achieves the same purpose through the use of flashbacks or reflections on past events. Examination of examples of some of these incidents shows Fielding commenting on charity, hypocrisy and various other moral ideas already mentioned.

In examining Fielding's authorial intrusions, it has been shown that he employed variations of ironic, as well as judgmental, statements to reveal his moral attitudes toward incidents, characters, and character motives. The irony ranges from the rhetorical to disclaim the moral position of a character to the verbal to emphasize a particular quality in a character.

Through the use of these devices, Fielding is able to promote such basic concepts in his moral system as the necessity of good nature, beneficence, prudence, and religion. He is also able to show the effects of the vices, hypocrisy and vanity, which contribute to moral corruption. The opposing of these virtues and vices in good and evil characters and sometimes in personae who are admixtures of them allow Fielding to provide a model for the moral man. That is his main intent, to provide a model for the guidance of the average man, with the conviction that man both individually and collectively in society would be the better for it.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Primary Sources

Fielding, Henry. Amelia. Introduction by A. R. Humphreys. Everyman's Library. 2 Vols. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1968.

_____. (Sir Alexander Drawcansir). The Covent Garden Journal. 2 Vols. Ed. Gerard Edward Jensen. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1915.

_____. Joseph Andrews and Shamela. Ed. with an Introduction by Martin C. Battestin. Riverside Editions. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin Co., 1961.

_____. Miscellanies, Volume I. Ed. with an Introduction by Henry Knight Miller. Wesleyan Edition. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1972.

_____. Tom Jones. Introduction by Beryl Rowland. Airmont Classic Series. New York: Airmont Publishing Co., 1967.

_____. The Complete Works of Henry Fielding, Esq. 16 Vols. Ed. William E. Henley. New York: Croscup and Sterling Co., 1902.

Locke, John. An Essay on Human Understanding. 2 Vols. Ed. John W. Yolton. London: J. M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1961.

Secondary Sources

Articles

Cauthen, I. B., Jr. "Fielding's Digressions in Joseph Andrews," College English 17 (April 1956):379-382.

Coley, William B. "The Background of Fielding's Laughter," Journal of English Literary History 26 (June 1959):229-252.

Crane, R. S. "Suggestions Toward a Genealogy of the 'Man of Feeling,'" Journal of English Literary History 1 (December 1934):205-230.

Hutchens, Eleanor N. "'Prudence' in Tom Jones: A Case Study of Connotative Irony," Philological Quarterly 39 (October 1960):496-507.

_____. "Verbal Irony in Tom Jones," Publications of the Modern Language Association 77 (March 1962):46-50.

Sherburn, George. "Fielding's Social Outlook," In Eighteenth Century English Literature: Modern Essays in Criticism. Ed. James L. Clifford. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1959.

Shesgreen, Sean. "The Moral Function of Thwackum, Square and Allowrthy," Studies in the Novel 2 (Summer 1970):159-167.

Work, James A. "Henry Fielding, Christian Censor," In The Age of Johnson: Essays Presented to Chauncey Brewster Tinker. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949.

Books

Alter, Robert. Fielding and the Nature of the Novel. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968.

Battestin, Martin C. The Moral Basis of Fielding's Art: A Study of Joseph Andrews. Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1959.

Golden, Morris. Fielding's Moral Psychology. Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1966.

Hatfield, Glenn W. Henry Fielding and the Language of Irony. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968.

Humphreys, A. R. The Augustan World. London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1954.

Hutchens, Eleanor N. Irony in Tom Jones. University, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1967.

Irwin, Michael. Henry Fielding: The Tentative Realist. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967.

Mccallister, Hamilton. Fielding. London: Evans Bros. Ltd., 1967.

Miller, Henry Knight. Essays on Fielding's Miscellanies: A Commentary on Volume One. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961.

Paulson, Ronald, ed. Fielding: A Collection of Critical Essays. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1962.

_____. Satire and the Novel in Eighteenth Century England. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967.

Rawson, C. J. Profiles in Literature: Henry Fielding. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1968.

Rogers, Pat. The Augustan Vision. New York: Barnes & Noble Books, 1974.

Shesgreen, Sean. Literary Portraits in the Novels of Henry Fielding. Dekalb, III.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1972.